

Meeting Individual Needs in Lower Secondary School

*A Comparative Study of Teachers'
Perspectives in Norway and England*

Eddy Kjær



Master of Philosophy in Comparative and International
Education

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

June 1st 2010

© Eddy Kjær

2010

Meeting Individual Needs in Lower Secondary School. A Comparative Study of Teachers' Perspectives in Norway and England.

Eddy Kjær

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

This comparative qualitative study is about lower secondary comprehensive school and teachers' perspectives towards equality and provision of individual need. The study is defined within the radical humanist paradigm, based on key elements from ideas of Habermas, Vygotsky and Bourdieu. The concepts of ideal speech situation, cultural tools, *habitus* and *field* are especially helpful to understand teachers' perspectives and cultural contexts.

The research is located in England and Norway as a result of their historical and political similarities in the emphasis on a comprehensive school approach, but also because cultural differences are evident between the two countries. The English essentialism and Norwegian encyclopaedism are examples of these differences. The research design is based on narrative semi-structured interviews with a total of 19 teachers from lower secondary schools in the cities of Bradford and Oslo.

In comparing England and Norway, similarities were evident in the teachers' interpretations of equality and individual need provision, but differences were also evident in their experiences of the same issues. The experiences of individual need provision in England was high, while a significant concern was directed to inequality of school access. In Norway, the equality of school access was high, but lack of individual need provision within the schools was evident. The cultural aspects were helpful in understanding these findings.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank the University of Oslo for arranging the Master of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education, and to the PFI department and administration of the program.

I would also like to express my gratefulness to my supervisor. Claire Poppy, you have contributed more than you can imagine. The honest and clear comments and discussions have been significant contributions to my academic and personal development. I would also like to thank you for true interest and engagement during challenging times. This study would not be the same without you.

I would like to thank all of my classmates for two interesting years of studies, and especially Rachel for all discussions and contributions during the time at the University of Oslo.

Special regards go to the four schools and 19 participants that contributed to this study. I appreciate your time and interest for the interviews, and for your honest and reflective answers. All of you contributed with valuable and useful information to the study.

I would also like to thank my family for all support before and during this study. You have contributed in different ways, but common for all of you is the interest you have shown during challenging and difficult periods. Special regards go to my parents Brit and Harald, my sister Anja, and to Offa, Ronny, Malene, Erlend and Iver.

One person especially has lived close to me during the last year of my studies. Tamuna, thank you for all the happiness and frustrations we have shared together in this period. I am very glad that you have been here.

To my friends Philip and Camilla, thank you for the help in preparations of my data collection. Torgeir and Hilde, thank you for all support and belief in new challenges.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	21
1.1	Rationale	22
1.1.1	Individual Needs	22
1.1.2	Comprehensive School.....	23
1.1.3	Teachers' Perspectives	25
1.1.4	Cultural Influence.....	26
1.2	Why Comparative Approach?.....	27
1.3	Research Aims	28
1.3.1	Research Questions	28
1.4	Methodology	28
1.5	Background and Motivation.....	29
1.6	Assumptions.....	29
1.7	Outline of Thesis	30
2	Theoretical Framework	33
2.1	Metatheoretical Considerations.....	33
2.1.1	Author's Comment: The Logic of Coherent Investigation	33
2.1.2	Critical Theory and Habermas	34
2.1.3	Socio-Cultural Theory and Vygotsky	37
2.1.4	Culture and Bourdieu	38
2.2	Concepts.....	42
2.2.1	Culture.....	42
2.2.2	Teachers' Perspectives	43
2.2.3	Individual Needs	43
2.2.4	Equality	44
2.2.5	Comprehensive Education	45
2.3	Summary	45
3	Literature Review.....	47
3.1	Historical Overview	47
3.2	Comprehensive Schools	49
3.3	Equality	51
3.4	Individual Needs	55
3.5	Teachers' Perspectives	56
3.6	Culture.....	58
3.7	Summary	59

4	Methodology	61
4.1	Research Questions	61
4.2	Research Design.....	61
4.2.1	Sampling	61
4.2.2	Participants.....	63
4.2.3	Materials.....	64
4.2.4	Procedure.....	65
4.2.5	Delimitations.....	66
4.2.6	Documentary Evidence	67
4.2.7	Ethical Issues.....	68
4.3	Reliability and Objectivity	68
4.4	Analysis.....	70
4.5	Summary	71
5	Cultural Background	73
5.1	Why England and Norway?	73
5.2	Geography and Policy	74
5.3	Curriculum Traditions.....	78
5.4	Curriculum History	80
5.5	Education Policy	85
5.6	Summary	88
6	Results.....	91
6.1	Equality	91
6.1.1	Findings.....	91
6.2	Socio-Economic Background.....	93
6.2.1	Findings.....	94
6.3	Assessment of Need	96
6.3.1	Findings.....	96
6.4	Students' Responsibility	100
6.4.1	Findings.....	100
6.5	School Circumstances	102
6.5.1	Findings.....	102
6.6	Teaching Resources	107
6.6.1	Findings.....	108
6.7	Summary	113
7	Discussion and Conclusions.....	115

7.1	Summary of the Study.....	115
7.2	Main Themes.....	117
7.3	Practice and Culture	121
7.4	Teachers' Toolbox	130
7.5	Socio-Economic Background.....	136
7.6	Conclusions	138
7.6.1	Summary	138
7.6.2	Limitations	140
7.6.3	Impact on Research and Policy	141
7.6.4	Further Research	142
7.6.5	Conclusion	143
8	References.....	145
9	Appendices.....	171

Tables, Figures and Appendices

<i>Figure 1.</i> Interaction between culture, policy and practice.....	33
<i>Figure 2.</i> A coherent investigation.....	34
<i>Figure 3.</i> Habitus.	40
<i>Figure 4.</i> Field.....	41
<i>Figure 5.</i> Research procedure.	65

<i>Appendix A.</i> Adjusted Teaching or Personalised Learning?	171
<i>Appendix B.</i> Letter of Request, English Version.....	177
<i>Appendix C.</i> Letter of Request, Norwegian Version.....	179
<i>Appendix D.</i> Ethical Guidelines, English Version.	181
<i>Appendix E.</i> Ethical Guidelines, Norwegian Version.	183
<i>Appendix F.</i> Interview Schedule, English Version.	185
<i>Appendix G.</i> Interview Schedule, Norwegian Version.	193
<i>Appendix H.</i> Coding Schedule.	201

Abbreviations and Translations

DCSF	-	Department for Children, Schools and Families.
DfES	-	Department for Education and Skills.
ECM	-	Every Child Matters.
EU	-	The European Union
NESH	-	De Nasjonale Forskningsetiske Komiteer [<i>The National Committees for Research Ethics in Norway</i>].
KD	-	Kunnskapsdepartementet [<i>Ministry of Education and Research</i>].
KUF	-	Kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet [<i>Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs</i>].
NATO	-	North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
OECD	-	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
OPSI	-	Office of Public Sector Information.
SSB	-	Statistisk Sentralbyrå [<i>Statistics Norway</i>].
QCDA	-	Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency.
Udir	-	Utdanningsdirektoratet [<i>Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training</i>].
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The Comprehensive School Resolution	-	Enhetsskolevedtaket
The Core Curriculum	-	Læreplanen, generell del
The Education Act	-	Opplæringslova
The Quality Framework	-	Prinsipper for opplæringen

1 Introduction

The United Nations stated the importance of a global strategy of ‘education for all’ and celebrating student differences through the Salamanca Statement in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994). The idea of education for all is not, however, a new phenomenon. The idea had relevance in many European countries in the post WW2 period in terms of rebuilding the nations’ welfare (Heyneman, 2003). This created political emphasis in comprehensive school policies, including access for all and equality in both England (Ball, 2008; Jones, 2008) and Norway (Baune, 2007).

Comprehensive school policy contains an ambitious vision that individuals’ needs should be provided across different student backgrounds, but the policy has been criticised as failing on this issue. The aim to develop a common culture through diversity and equality in the education system has been emphasised (Ball, 2008; Dale, 2008a; Haydon, 2008), but has been criticised for being a “one-size-fits-all” model (Simon, 2001). It is interesting that Dale (2008a) questions if academic diversity works as an obstacle that might decrease rather than increase differentiation in schools. A following issue is evident when Kirk, Gallagher, Anastasiow and Coleman (2006) suggest that the individual needs of high achievers are not met in schooling. This brings up an interesting perspective about the degree to which comprehensive schools are able to provide for equality and individual needs or if Haydon (2008) is right when he claims that the comprehensive ideal is a social rather than academic ideal.

The curricula are important because they communicate priorities and preferences from policymakers to the practical level of teaching (Trowler, 2003) and how teaching should take place in schools (Klette, Carlgren, Rasmussen, Simola and Sundkvist, 2000). Implementation gaps can be reduced within education if teachers are involved in policymaking (Bray, 2007), and makes a natural focus at teachers’ perspectives in investigation of possible implementation gaps. In this case, it is interesting that equality involves students’ rights to a certain amount of education, but also more education for individuals if needed (Warnock, 2006). This means that all students should have access to schooling as well as opportunities for provision of individual need. These issues are confirmed in the present curricula of England and Norway, which emphasise the issues of equality and individual development (KUF, 1997¹; QCDA, 2007a).

¹ KUF is used as reference to the Norwegian *core curriculum*. The author acknowledges the new name of the Ministry of Education and Research and curriculum of 2006, but according to the Norwegian directorate for education and training, KUF is the originally publisher of the *core curriculum*. From now on, the Norwegian *core curriculum* is referred as KUF, 1997.

In spite of similar policies, pedagogy is culturally created (Alexander, 2008) and different practices across nations should be expected (Trowler, 2003). This makes a comparative approach useful in investigations of differences and similarities within education (Hahn, 2006), but also to improve knowledge about different education systems (Crossley & Watson, 2003). In addition, the comparative approach plays an important role in providing data on educational practices and to understand how policies influence practice (Broadfoot, 1999).

To summarise, the main focus of this study is an investigation of teachers' perspectives of how individual needs are met in lower secondary schools in England and Norway. Both nations focused upon a comprehensive school approach and meeting of individual needs in the post WW2 period (Ball, 2008; Engelsen, 2003; Jones, 2008), but in spite of this, it is natural that differences will appear (Trowler, 2003). This study is, therefore, concerned with a comparative investigation of teachers' perspectives on equality and individual need provision in lower secondary comprehensive schools. Below is a detailed outline of the rationale for the study and consideration of its comparative nature.

1.1 Rationale

The rationale part for this study based upon four parts; why investigate individual needs (1.1.1); why investigate education policy with an emphasis upon the comprehensive school approach (1.1.2); why investigate teachers' perspectives (1.1.3); why is culture relevant to understand education (1.1.4)? In addition, the use of qualitative comparative approach is discussed (1.2).

1.1.1 Individual Needs

The human right to education for all reached clear cross-national agreement in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), and has been followed up by EFA goal 6 that emphasise pedagogically diversity in terms of styles and methods to meet all students (UNESCO, 2005). The importance of meeting students' individual needs is crucial for developing individual potential in school, and puts high demands to teachers' practice. Meeting individual needs is directly linked to purpose of schooling when Chitty (2001) describes education as "the idea that all children have talents and abilities which are there to be fostered and developed by creative and committed teachers" (p. 19).

Provision of individual needs was emphasised in education policies in the Norwegian curriculum as early as 1939 (Engelsen, 2003), while the idea of individual needs was justified in

the English tripartite system and Education Act in 1944 (Ball, 2008). The national aim of meeting individual needs in a system based on diversity and equality create a dilemma in terms of teachers' opportunities to meet all students' needs (Dale, 2008b). Furthermore, it is reasonable to believe that similar dilemmas to this appear in the same type of schools, but also that teachers' interpretations, experiences and practice (Trowler, 2003) of individual need provision differ. This makes a comparative qualitative investigation a logical approach.

Vygotsky supports the importance of meeting individual needs in his socio-cultural theory of individual development by interaction with others (Kroksmark, 2006). He further claims that individual potential is developed through the zone of proximal development where he points out the importance of adult guidance (Daniels, 2001), in this case represented by teachers. Due to this his ideas have a relevance to teachers' practice and their abilities to meet every student in the zone of proximal development to attain further competence. Furthermore, it is interesting that the concept of special need is directed towards provision of learning difficulties (Farrell, M., 2003), as Engelsen (2003) claims that all children have different needs. In other words, individual need provision should not only be about special needs education, but start on an individual basis for all (Langford, 2005). In this regard, Vygotsky's contributions to understanding individual needs are useful, but despite this, a literature search reveals a gap in teachers' perspectives to individual needs using a comparative qualitative approach.

1.1.2 Comprehensive School

The comprehensive school approach has several functions and was emphasised as an influential factor in Europe during the rebuilding of nations in the post-WW2 period (Heyneman, 2003). The creation of a common culture and equal opportunities were emphasised through access for all and student diversity (Pring, 2008). A result of these priorities is that the comprehensive school policy represents a social as well as an academic project (Haydon, 2008).

The political idea of the comprehensive school is, as stated above, directed towards access for all and equal opportunities. The political intention of education for all is well meant, but it is also reasonable to believe that it has some practical implications. First of all, the understanding of Vygotsky is relevant for educational practice in the comprehensive school approach. The comprehensive school is based upon the idea of student diversity, and Vygotsky claims that education should contain mixed ability groups and teacher responsibility to provide guidance according to students' needs (Langford, 2005). In other words, teaching practice is intended to

provide for individual need in a wide spectrum of students. As Dale (2008b) explains, an increased number of students combined with wider academic range and social diversity creates a new situation for the teachers, where educational results often decrease (Dale, 2008b).

Therefore, an investigation of teachers' experiences and interpretations of individual needs in a comprehensive approach is reasonable, to indicate how political visions are realised in practice. The English and Norwegian educational visions were focused upon a comprehensive approach, and meeting of individual needs already apparent in *The Education Act in 1944* (Ball, 2008) and *Normalplanen 1939* (Engelsen, 2003). This makes it likely that similarities will appear, but it should also be taken into consideration that education policies depend upon cultural and national context, which create practical routines and manifestations (Stein, 2004). In other words, it is natural to believe that different development and distinctions will appear between nations (Trowler, 2003), including England and Norway.

If, as stated above, cultural and national context determines teaching practice, it is also reasonable to investigate how the national policies are reflected in practice. Despite the same policies and aims, different priorities within the nations are evident. This is exemplified by how Chitty (2001) emphasises how the comprehensive school should meet the individual needs, while Haydon (2008) criticises the comprehensive ideal as being based upon social rather than academic aims. A clear and distinct direction is absent, which brings up the link between policies and practices. This makes an investigation of teachers' abilities to fulfil policies as realistic or utopian reasonable.

In this concern, the communication between policy makers and practitioners appears to be important to reduce possible implementation gaps (Trowler, 2003). The links between theory and practice are significant issues in improving education (Hahn, 2006; Potts, 2007). This is exemplified by the nature of curricula as politically created, but also the use of them on a practical level. Teachers' interpretations and implementations of the curricula influence practical issues in planning and pedagogical practice (Pollard, 2005), which represent the importance of communication and a common understanding to develop and improve policy as well as practice. Teachers' contributions to bottom-up, rather than top-down policies are helpful in leading to improvements to policies, and have the opportunity to indicate and reveal political failures and successes at the practical level (Trowler, 2003).

1.1.3 Teachers' Perspectives

The importance of teachers as educators in school is unquestionable and should be an important part of educational research. UNESCO (2005) underlines this view, claiming that, “any reform to improve quality should pay attention to establishing dialogue with teachers” (p. 22).

Teachers' perspectives represent the practical level of education and are therefore a resource for improvements and changes in policy and practice. García and Ariza (2005) found the following:

Many studies have shown that it is indispensable to involve teachers as agents in any process of educational improvement. (...). Having a clearer picture of our own professional knowledge should hopefully help not only to improve our own teaching but also be a small contribution to educational improvement in the school in general. (p. 31)

The importance of exploring what is going on in the classrooms is clear to improve and change practice and policy (Bray, 2007). Furthermore, it is argued that teachers make judgements that lead to different practice and different results in teaching (Oberg, 2005). This makes it reasonable to investigate their perspectives to better understand the practical level of education. An investigation of their experiences and interpretations involves them as practitioners and professionals, providing links between research, practice and policy, and so, by involving practitioners in the research process, policy, research and practice be improved (Hodkinson & Smith, 2004). Trowler (2003) also supports this view in his explanation of how teachers' involvement in policy making is a way to decrease implementation gaps, while Goodson (2008) underlines that investigations of teachers have the potential to expose the shallowness and prescriptiveness of views of schooling. In other words, teachers' perspectives can contribute to improved practice (Oberg, 2005) and policymaking (Trowler, 2003).

The national curricula of England and Norway include many tasks for a teacher, but the principle of equality is clearly underlined in both nations' curricula (KUF, 1997; QCDA, 2007b). In this concern, equality is relevant for Norwegian teachers' individual need provision when it is explained as “equality of educational opportunity” (KUF, 1997:5) and access for all rather as individualised teaching (Werler & Sivesind, 2008). The English understanding of equality as steps to “personalise the curriculum, designing learning experiences to meet individual needs and engage all learners” (QCDA, 2008:4) naturally affect teachers' individual need provision. The only group of adults able to experience these aspects in their everyday pedagogic work is the teachers, and as practitioners they are an important group when educational practice is being investigated (Bray, 2007). In spite of their role as facilitators of education, they are often denied a role in development of policies (Farrell, M., 2003). This perspective is further supported by Kennedy (2005) when he explains, “most reforms don't

acknowledge the realities of classroom teaching” (p. 3). That implementation creates different outcome than intended is expected (Trowler, 2003) and the implementation of the comprehensive school approach is probably no exception. On the one hand it does emphasise diversity and equality, but on the other hand it can be seen, as an obstacle to equality and individual need provision where the range of social and academic skills are too wide. It is therefore reasonable to question how this approach affects teachers’ individual need provision. In this study’s particular concern, to question if teachers are able to provide for both aspects, which are preferred in the comprehensive schools, or whether one has to be prioritised ahead of the other. The possible distinction between policy and practice make an investigation of teachers’ perspectives in meeting individual needs a reasonable and relevant topic for investigation.

1.1.4 Cultural Influence

Many aspects of culture have been investigated and explained by a huge number of writers (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000; Haydon, 2008; Hofstede, 2001; Pring 2008). In this context, the fact that education is embedded by culture in terms of societies, histories and values (Hahn, 2006) is significant, and is supported by several definitions where common values, tradition and heritage describe important aspects of culture. The value in access for all and meeting individual needs in a comprehensive school system are examples of common values and represent important educational perspectives in England and Norway. The link between policy and practice might differ between and within nations (Hahn, 2006) and an investigation of cultural aspects such as values, tradition and heritage, might contribute to explanations of any differences in policy and practice.

That outcomes differ from the intentions of policies is to be expected and it is logical that different cultures can lead to different development of policies, teacher experiences, interpretations and practice (Trowler, 2003). Cultural differences do also involve the question of political power where a pressure to maintain separate provision of education still exists (Farrell, P & Ainscow, 2002). Furthermore, according to Vygotsky and the socio-cultural theory, all humans are influenced by culture (Daniels, 2001). This means that both teachers and students are influenced by their cultural context. Vygotsky does not only explain that all students have different needs, but also how cultural tools must be created to meet the students’ needs (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007). In terms of this perspective, differences in teachers’ experiences, interpretations and pedagogical practices are to be expected between England and

Norway. Looking at how processes of implementation are influenced by culture can help in understanding how and to what degree similar policies develop in different directions.

1.2 Why Comparative Approach?

The role of research has increased in importance for policy makers in recent decades and a variety of research approaches have appeared (Crossley & Watson, 2003). One of these approaches is comparative research, which aims to collect educational experience and inform a nation about how it stands in comparison to others (Higginson, 2001). The relevance of comparative approaches to contemporary education is shown by the PISA studies; governments in more than 30 countries take part in the quantitative data assessments, to create a background for new decisions (OECD, 2007). Furthermore, international agencies as OECD, UNESCO and The World Bank make use of comparative research. The influence of comparison on policy makers is exemplified by PISA, which was created to make comparisons between education systems (Goldstein, 2004). In other words, comparisons create opportunities to focus on international similarities and differences, which force policy makers to see their decisions in a broader international perspective and to focus on issues in their home context where they can make better decisions (Hahn, 2006).

The aspect of learning from comparison has relevance on different levels. Investigations of the practitioners' level have significance for policy makers' examination of education systems (Bray, 2007). The pragmatic goal of comparative research is to find effective practices and policies that can improve solutions in the home country (Hahn, 2006). In spite of international focus on comparative research, a search through education literature reveals a lack of qualitative and comparative studies of teachers' perspectives. One alternative to improve comparative research on practitioners is, according to Alexander (1999), to change the focus from statistics towards studies of teachers, classrooms and schools. The risk of excluding the teachers' level in research and influence on policy-making might result in education policy as a theoretical vision with a broken link to the teachers' practical actions (Trowler, 2003). A qualitative comparative investigation of teachers' experiences and interpretations is a contribution to fill this information gap and contribute to better practice and policy decisions internationally.

1.3 Research Aims

The rationale for this study leads to a series of aims and research questions which are stated below:

- To identify issues and challenges in equality and provision of individual need in lower secondary comprehensive schools.
- To investigate possible implementation gaps between education policy, equality and teachers' practice of meeting students' individual needs.
- To provide policy makers, school leaders and teachers with information on how teachers provide for students' individual needs.
- Contribute to a debate on values and individual opportunities in educational policy, culture and practice.

1.3.1 Research Questions

1. What are teachers' interpretations and experiences of equality and provision of individual needs in the Norwegian and English education system?
2. What are the main differences and similarities in the approach of meeting individual needs in English and Norwegian education policies?
3. What influence does culture have upon the implementation of education policy in England and Norway, and in particular, the concepts of equality and individual need?

1.4 Methodology

This study is a qualitative study which utilises semi-structured interviews with a narrative approach. The qualitative approach is natural because it represents in-depth investigations and personal experiences (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, the semi-structured approach is flexible, but also used to cover specific topics (Bryman, 2008). This study is on topics related to equality, individual need and culture. The study is based within the countries of England and Norway, represented by Bradford and Oslo. Four schools are randomly sampled to increase the richness of data (Patton, 2002), two from different socio-economic areas in each city. The indicator of the socio-economic status of areas is the free school meal rate in Bradford and income rate in Oslo. The participants were 19 teachers with experience from lower secondary comprehensive schools. The analysis is based on grounded theory where the processes of open coding are

helpful to find the core consistencies and meanings of the interviews (Gillham, 2000). Furthermore, the coding process leads to categorisation, conceptualisation and comparing of data (Bryman, 2008). The saturation process has two stages; first, coding of data; second, collection of data (Bryman, 2008). The first stage is fulfilled, while second stage is not carried out because of limitations to this study.

Furthermore, the research question three involves cultural considerations. When it is taken into consideration that culture can be explained as common values, norms, traditions and heritage (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000), it is reasonable to believe that this small study is limited in how far it can address these aspects satisfactorily. Education is embedded in culture (Hahn, 2006) and an investigation of English and Norwegian cultural backgrounds is natural. To address this concern, chapter five, *cultural background*, provides a contribution alongside the empirical data offering an understanding of education from cultural perspectives. The chapter is based upon literature, on English and Norwegian curriculum traditions, history, geography and political aspects of culture.

1.5 Background and Motivation

The researcher has background in primary school teaching and school leadership in Norway. Experiences in both comprehensive schools as well as a special need school, and several years in education have created a personal and professional motivation to consider high and low achieving students. In addition, recent educational debates and policies have influenced the choice of topic in this study. The choice of countries, England and Norway, was natural. The choice of Norwegian education was based upon personal experiences and interests, while England was chosen because of political and historical similarities in the comprehensive school approach. The choice of teachers' perspectives was based upon personal experiences as a teacher and school leader in Norwegian schools.

1.6 Assumptions

A natural risk in qualitative studies is bias during interviews, interpretation and analysis, therefore a consideration of the researcher's background and assumptions are important to increase the trustworthiness of findings (Patton, 2002). The researchers' own Norwegian background and experience have influenced the views relevant to this study; experience as a primary teacher in a multicultural area in Oslo have implications for views on how realistic it is

that teachers can meet individual needs, while experiences of successful provision of individual needs in a special school for adults have the opposite effect. The research topic and choices have also been influenced by assumptions about the English and Norwegian education system. The assumptions in Norwegian lower secondary schools are that teachers have difficulties in the provision for individual needs because of incoherence between diversity and resources, while the English schools provide individual needs by grouping students according to academic levels. Teachers in Norwegian comprehensive schools are probably more focused upon social rather than academic results, while their colleges in England tend to have opposite priorities.

1.7 Outline of Thesis

This section gives a brief overview of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This chapter provides a brief introduction followed by the study rationale. Furthermore, the comparative approach is briefly discussed, while research aims, questions, methodology and assumptions outlined in the end of the chapter.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework

The chapter explain the philosophical background for the thesis and includes epistemological and ontological considerations. The radical humanist paradigm, critical theory and socio-cultural theory are discussed. In addition, concepts derived from Bourdieu are discussed in the context of culture.

Chapter 3 – Literature review

This chapter contains an overview of relevant literature for this study. A historical overview of English and Norwegian education is provided. In addition, the concepts of comprehensive school, equality, individual need, teachers' perspectives and culture are outlined.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

The chapter explains choice of methodology and design including sampling, materials and procedure. Ethical issues, analysis and reliability are also discussed.

Chapter 5 – Cultural background

This chapter contains a historical overview of education policies in England and Norway. Educational priorities, values, concepts and curriculum traditions are discussed.

Chapter 6 – Results

This chapter contains the findings from interviews in England and Norway. Similarities and differences are presented and briefly commented on from a comparative perspective.

Chapter 7 – Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter aims to discuss and conclude the core findings and indicate issues for further political and practical development as well improvements related to the findings in chapter 6.

2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a discussion of related theories and concepts in this study. The chapter contains two sections; meta-theoretical considerations (2.1) with a focus upon the logic of a coherent investigation (2.1.1), referencing Habermas (2.1.2), Vygotsky (2.1.3) and Bourdieu (2.1.4). The second section is a clarification of relevant concepts (2.2). First of all, this study needs a theory which can give the teachers a voice. In this concern, Habermas is useful in the representation of critical theory and explanations of how subjects can contribute to changes. This makes his theory relevant to give the teachers a voice to change and improve education. Second, this study needs theories of individual need provision and culture. In terms of provision for individual need, the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky explains how students' individual development increases with cultural adjustments and the creation of cultural tools. Furthermore, Bourdieu provides a variety of concepts related to cultural power and reproduction. In terms of understanding teachers' perspectives from their cultural context, the concepts of *habitus* and *field* are especially of interest in this study.

2.1 Metatheoretical Considerations

The orientation towards subjective and radical change dimensions defines this study as part of the radical humanist paradigm and aligns with critical theory. Subjectivism is an important part of critical theory and represents a contradiction to what Burrell and Morgan (1979) define as ideological superstructures as culture and policy. The tensions between subjects and objective drivers as culture and policy are focused in this study. The interaction between culture, policy and practice is illustrated by the triangle below.

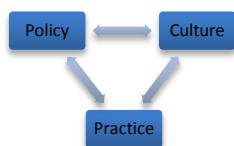


Figure 1. Interaction between culture, policy and practice.

2.1.1 Author's Comment: The Logic of Coherent Investigation

There are many factors that influence aspect of education, and to cover all of them is not possible in terms of limitations in this study. Education is embedded in culture (Hahn, 2006), while the links between theory and practice are unquestionably important to explain and

improve education (Hahn, 2006; Potts, 2007). Culture, policy and practice are further linked together by Goodson (2008) when he explains how teachers' practice is politically and social constructed.

Culture represents a superior layer of values, tradition and heritage, and Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) are useful in clarifying theories about how cultural influence is a question of power in implementation of policy and how teachers' pedagogical practice reproduce social differences. Culture is a macro influence factor for the layer of policy that sets out the purpose, aim and implementation of education, but according to Trowler (2003) it might give other results than intended. Curriculum and white papers represent policymakers' visions, and are also links between policy and practice because of their relevance as planning tools. Teachers' experiences, interpretations and use of curriculum as a tool have consequences for daily life practice, in this case the question of how individual needs are met in a comprehensive school approach. This makes teachers' practice the third and innermost layer in meeting of individual needs.

The coherence and links between culture, ideology and teachers' practice to meet individual need are embedded by these three factors, and an investigation without one of them would have an obvious missing link in the logic of how individual needs are provided for, from a macro to a micro level.

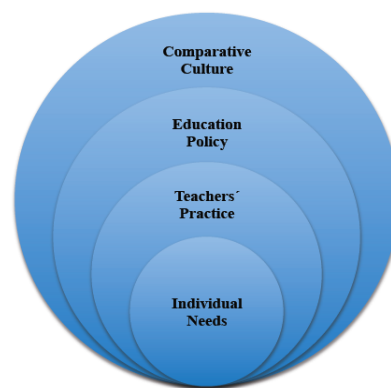


Figure 2. A coherent investigation.

2.1.2 Critical Theory and Habermas

Critical theory is “an approach to the analysis of the society that seeks to offer a political evaluation of that society and to guide political practice” (Edgar, 2006, p. 31), and has a natural relevance to the radical humanist paradigm in emphasising change through subjective critique. Teachers' perspectives represent the subjective aspects in this study, and should be valued as

important contributions to change and improve policies (Bray, 2007). The critical theory contains, according to Burrell and Morgan (1979) a tension between the subjective and objective dimension, and aim to cover theoretical, practical and philosophical levels. The historical perspectives from Kant to the Frankfurt school includes writers as Hegel, Marx, Gramsci and Horkheimer that have influenced critical theory in different directions, while the influence from Habermas is emphasised in this study.

Habermas (1972) discusses, in “Knowledge and human interests” how subjects can contribute to make changes. This is relevant in terms of teachers’ perspectives and to give them a voice. Furthermore, he put a focus to the subject’s role in a critique of ideologies and objective illusions through knowledge, but does not deny that objective influences to the subject exist. Despite the subjective emphasis, Habermas was concerned that culture, society and individuals were all important to produce and continue valid knowledge (Sitton, 2003). Based on this, Habermas explains where changes can take place; in communicative action or strategic action (Thomassen, 2008).

Strategic action refers to a situation influenced by external factors such as political power, that are imposed by others that have no commitment to rules in the society (Sitton, 2003). Habermas does not consider strategic action as satisfying and instead presents the theory of communicative action and the ideal speech situation, and consider individuals as results of communication that maintain cultural continuity (Sitton, 2003). The ideal speech situation presents reality without political interests and power, where all have the same ability and will to contribute and are able to see others rather than only themselves and achieve a mutual understanding. This means that social integration has to be achieved through communication where all subjects have equal opportunities and willingness to take part in a society, and brings up the question of teachers’ influence to make changes. Decisions in the ideal speech situation are based upon neutrality rather than influence from superstructures of culture, capital and the media, which work as obstacles to mutual understanding (Edgar, 2006). Under the ideal speech situation, teachers and policy makers should be on the same level to discuss and find a mutual understanding, but this is not happening at present (Kennedy, 2005). In other words, teachers’ perspectives of individual need provision and equality should be taken into consideration in policymaking, but the ideal speech situation is broken and an implementation gap is evident if teachers are excluded from the political processes.

Kant was criticised for his focus on knowledge as an individual and isolated process (Edgar, 2006), and it is natural to draw lines towards the ideal speech that appears as a communication vacuum. Habermas makes it clear that the ideal speech situation is a utopian situation, to highlight imperfection, rather than a realistic situation, but has nevertheless been criticised for being naive and unrealistic (Edgar, 2005). It is assumed that communication and language have the ability to impose and manipulate or reshape understanding and practice (Young, 2000) rather than a single focus at individual consciousness. In other words, objective influences as culture and policy are impossible to avoid. In addition, social life is reproduced through communicative actions that shape individuals and interact in a structure Habermas called the lifeworld; culture, society and person (Sitton, 2003). As long as culture, society or policy influence humans' knowledge they represent communication an extension of objective power and the ideal speech situation as a utopia. This means that groups compete for different interests and that several aspects in terms of political and cultural contexts influence changes, and should be investigated accordingly.

Relevance to Teachers' Perspectives

Habermas has relevance to teachers' perspectives in two views that are emphasised in this study; teachers as critical subjects; the awareness of objective influence.

The way Habermas (1972) explains subjects' roles in mutual understanding and ideal speech situation make teachers' perspectives to a reasonable focus, based on including practitioners in the development of policies and practice. Habermas considered education as a social-historical development and a result of communication (Young, 2000), so teachers' involvements as practitioners are reasonable. Their critiques of contemporary situations are emergent (Young, 2000) and suggestions for changes and improvements make them relevant to this study. In addition, Habermas' belief in subjects' knowledge and communication is also useful to give the teachers a voice in an "increasing need for processed decisions" (Young, 2001:540). To what degree are mutual understanding and the ideal speech situation a part of changes and development in the provision of students' individual needs?

That Habermas (1972) describes the mutual understanding and ideal speech situation as imperfection that opens up for objective influences, and should by that be considered in investigating teachers' perspectives. His acceptance of objective influences is useful to put teachers' perspectives in political and cultural contexts. He also considers culture as a factor in production and reproduction of the social world and a requirement to social integration and

socialisation (Taylor, 2000), and that makes his perspectives on culture interesting for this study. As long as communication and language can impose and reshape understandings (Edgar, 2005), it is natural to believe that subjects, in this case teachers' perspectives, are influenced by what Burrell and Morgan (1979) explain as tension between subjective and objective dimension. The influence of objective power on practice, through culture and policy, is further supported by Trowler (2003) and is a focus in this study.

2.1.3 Socio-Cultural Theory and Vygotsky

Vygotsky takes the subjects' perspectives and create links between teaching practice, culture and individual needs in the socio-cultural approach. This makes him relevant for this study. From a metatheoretical perspective, Vygotsky's place in sociology has been discussed in relation to a number of terms including activity theory, cultural-historical, sociohistorical and socio-cultural, where the latter is most used in contemporary debates in the West (Daniels, 2008) and is used in this study as well.

The socio-cultural theory claims that culture shapes peoples' minds (Wells & Claxton, 2002) and is concerned with the interaction and influence between individuals and the society (Daniels, 2001). In the following of this, Vygotsky claims that all individuals are influenced by culture (Daniels, 2001) and goes even further when he denies human existence without culture (Cole & Gajdamaschko, 2007). He does therefore deny a separation between individuals and culture and explains human actions as results of cultural context. In this concern, he explains how pedagogic tools have to be created in teaching and learning (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007). This means that teachers have to create tools according to the context they operate in, and that different cultures have different "toolboxes". As Vygotsky explains it, students should receive information and learning based on their individual skills and background (Wells & Claxton, 2002).

This is especially interesting in the context of individual need in a comprehensive school approach, which is based upon access for all and student diversity (Pring, 2008). Taking this into consideration, teachers have to use a wide spectrum of tools to provide for a wide spectrum of student needs, but are also, as stated above, influenced by the cultural circumstances and create cultural tools according to the context they teach in. Tools are, in other words, created according to modes of communication and interaction that is shaped by culture. This means that culture affects pedagogical practice and makes teachers behaviour a result of cultural influence

rather than neutral practice. A core conclusion results from this; that the creation and use of different cultural tools takes place between teachers as well as nations. This makes an investigation of teachers' perspectives in England and Norway as appropriate to reveal differences and similarities in the "toolboxes".

That use of cultural tools differ according to cultural contexts is further confirmed when Vygotsky emphasise that students' disabilities are culturally determined (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007). This means that student disabilities are socially rather than biologically created and makes students themselves into cultural products, which has implications for the practices of individual need provision; if students' disabilities are culturally derived, the solution to meet individual needs should also contain cultural adjustments to teaching. Teachers have to use compensatory strategies to meet the students' needs (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007). This includes strategies directed toward the zone of proximal development and students' potential, positive differentiation and variety of methodology in teaching (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007). In other words, adults, in this case English and Norwegian teachers, have significant roles in student's individual development. This makes it natural to investigate teachers' perspectives on pedagogical practice, individual need provision and to what degree cultural differences are evident.

Furthermore, in a contemporary society where globalisation and homogenisation of education are taking place, it is interesting that the socio-cultural theory describes diversity as having a positive effect on learning (Wells & Claxton, 2002). Indeed, the comprehensive school approach is based on the diversity of students (Haydon, 2008). Several positive and negative aspects can be listed, but one aspect is clear; student diversity has to impact on teachers' pedagogical practice (Dale, 2008a). A natural dilemma for the comprehensive school approach appears when teaching is, on the one hand dependent on a globalised and homogenized curriculum with common goals and aims (Wells & Claxton, 2002), while on the other hand it is expected to provide for individual need. A natural question arises about what degree of diversity is an advantage or obstacle to students' individual development.

2.1.4 Culture and Bourdieu

Bourdieu's concepts apply across many scientific discourses, and he has been claimed to be a conceptual artist (Robbins, 2000). This "title" is not randomly chosen and his concepts of *habitus* and *field* have relevance to this study. These concepts are important because they are

used to explain cultural interactions and relations in the society. Bourdieu has chosen to avoid subjective and objective extremes (Edgar & Sedgewick, 2002) and this makes epistemological categorisation difficult when he has refused to create a systematic social theory (Robbins, 2000).

Despite this, Bourdieu is helpful in understanding of cultural influence upon teaching practice. In “Reproduction in education, society and culture”, Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) explain how education tends to reproduce cultural dispositions. It is natural to believe that culture is an essential factor to pedagogic practice. This is confirmed when Burrell and Morgan (1979) describe culture acts as an objective superstructure and further explain that superstructures influence and determine human actions. In other words, teachers are influenced by the cultural context they interact in. Teachers are not totally independent, but are driven by cultural circumstances. In this case, Norwegian and English teachers’ perspectives of equality and individual need provision are influenced by cultural contexts. This makes Bourdieu’s explanations of *habitus* and *field* relevant to this study, as ways of understanding cultural influences on human actions.

Habitus

The concept of *habitus* is helpful to understand how the social world is created as a product of historical antecedents (Moore, 2004). This means that people are shaped by their surroundings and that personal belief and dispositions are created through social structures. Furthermore, *habitus* has an endless capacity to create thoughts, expressions and actions, which Bourdieu calls products and which are described being limited by historical and social conditions (Moore, 2004). Based on this, it is natural to believe that teachers, as well as others, create their social reality through history, thoughts, expressions and actions.

Habitus brings Bourdieu towards structuralism in his explanation of all social structures as being generated in practice by social agents (Robbins, 2000). This means that people adjust their behaviour and actions according to the context they operate in. Further he links *habitus* to social practice, where practice is seen as social creations and a product of history where every society creates multiple *fields* of practice (Moore, 2004). This make all humans derive dispositions of how to act in different contexts, and possess by this an inherited concept of the society that is further modified and adapted by the peoples’ conditions and experiences. In this concern, it is natural to believe that teachers are no exception. Furthermore, *habitus* is absence of objective rules or roles (Moore, 2004) and shaped by individuals without stimuli of how people should behave (Robbins, 2000). This creates the social world by humans’ continually

adaptive rather than purposeful (Robbins, 2000) and as a lifelong learning process of how people respond to different social situations (Garrett, 2009). This is illustrated by the figure below.

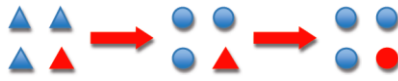


Figure 3. Habitus.

An explanation of this illustration is required; the triangles represent teachers in a certain culture with certain values, norms, traditions and heritage. One of the triangles moves to another country and another culture, represented by the circles. The triangle is now surrounded by the culture of the circles. After an amount of time, it is natural that the triangle has maintained some personal characteristics, but also adapted towards the new culture. In other words, the triangle adapted from one *habitus* to another. This means that individual teachers have an element of agency, but within the constraints of the culture they operate. To specify, English and Norwegian teachers' practices adapt to the established reality, and are to a high degree determined by, cultural dispositions within the field of pedagogical practice in each country. An investigation of teachers established reality is needed to offer explanations of different practice.

Field

The concept of *field* was used by Bourdieu to illustrate how individuals create social relationships and structures through collective actions (Robbins, 2000). Furthermore, it explains how a *field* is structured through individuals with common beliefs, norms and values.

There are a various number and types of *fields* in the society and every *field* has access to power within their specific context (Crossley, 2005). With regards to this study, *fields* of pedagogic practice are established. This means that teachers create different *fields*, based upon their beliefs, norms and values. As mentioned above, there are various types of *fields*, which make it natural to believe that *fields* of pedagogical practice differ between nations, in this case England and Norway.

Another important aspect of *fields* is how power is generated within them, and has the abilities to influence decision-making in specific *fields*, but also how power is evident when *fields* compete with each other (Robbins, 2000). Bourdieu outlines this when he claims that new people create discussion and conflicts, which develop the *field* further (Robbins, 2000). This means that new people with new knowledge, values or norms can develop every *field* through

discussions and conflicts. In contrast, he does also explain how reproduction happens when new people enter a *field* and copy the pre-established context and expected behaviour. These tensions between development and maintenance of behaviour are illustrated as tensions between production and reproduction (Robbins, 2000). This is interesting in the context of teachers' power and influence on policy making. Teachers have the potential to produce new knowledge to the *field* of policy and should have the power to influence their established *field*, but are in competition to the *field* of policy. This brings up the question if teachers and policy makers collaborate in production of their *fields*, or if the established *fields* are reproduced? It is claimed that teachers should influence to policy making, but the reality is that they are not involved when it comes to practice (Kennedy, 2005). This is confirmed when Lingard (2009) consider that policy production as disjunctive without the logics of teachers' practice, but also when Edgar and Sedgewick (2002) explain that relationships within a society are reproduced by political and cultural actions.

Furthermore, *fields* are, in contradiction to *habitus*, in a continuous change of status and development. Bourdieu exemplifies this in his understanding of how objectivated capital exchanges through the *fields* as strategic movements (Robbins, 2000). This means that every *field* contain a certain social and cultural value at a certain time, which can change according to accepted norms, values and traditions in different societies. In this concern, it is interesting to question the value of the *field* of pedagogical practice. Are the *field* of pedagogical practice able to influence policy making? If not, who determine the accepted norms, values and traditions that are reflected in the policies? Based on these questions, a competition for resources appears where those with highest objectivated capital have best chances to succeed to increase their value (Crossley, 2005). In other words, the *field* status can be illustrated as stairways where the sum of economical, cultural and social capital decide which stair the individuals belong to (fig. 4).

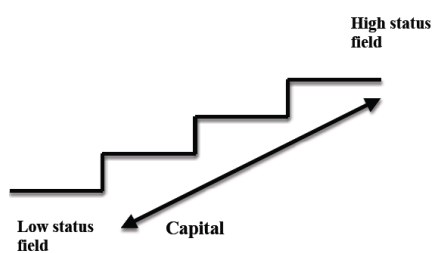


Figure 4. Field.

Higher degree of capital puts them on the top stairs, while low degree of capital put them on the lower stairs. Some of the *fields* can go up and down depended on the societies acceptance of norms, values and traditions. Increased capital entails increased status and power. To be more specific, this means that the *field* of pedagogical practice is dynamic, depending on the acceptance in the society. A high level of capital results in high degree of acceptance and influence, while low level of capital results in low degree of the same factors. A natural question appears, how high degree of acceptance and influence is evident in the Norwegian and English *fields* of pedagogical practice?

2.2 Concepts

This section provides a discussion of theoretical implications for the key concepts in this study. Culture is clearly a key concept in this study (2.2.1). There are, however, four further concepts which require discussion; teachers' perspectives (2.2.2); individual needs (2.2.3); equality (2.2.4); comprehensive education (2.2.5).

2.2.1 Culture

In "Reproduction in education, society and culture", Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) explain culture as common values, norms, tradition and heritage. In addition, Pring (2008) describes culture as heritage, social traditions and shared values and practices. These aspects are also emphasised in the understanding of culture in this study.

First of all, the national level of culture is relevant in terms of common national values, norms, traditions and heritage. It is assumed that all education is grounded in social and political values (Alexander, 2008), and makes it natural to focus on national political priorities and preferences in England and Norway. In this concern, it is interesting that curricula reflect the culture (Feinberg, 2008), but also that curricula reflect the history of the society they were created in (Erben & Dickinson, 2004). In addition, curricula define values such as what counts as knowledge and who should have access to it (Nash, 2004). This means that curriculum traditions are relevant to understanding teachers' historically and contemporary cultural contexts. Furthermore, Cummings (2003) explains how cultures develop differently in various countries. In this concern, he underlines that ideological, political, military and economic changes developed distinctive settings for modern education. This means that, in addition to historical-political patterns, it is reasonable to take geographical contexts in consideration of national cultures. In other words, values, norms, traditions and heritage are explained through

two perspectives; geographical and historical-political aspects. It is therefore natural to investigate education culture through national education systems and curriculum traditions.

Furthermore, policies must be implemented into practice. This means that the practitioners of the policies, in this case the teachers, are influenced by educational cultures and, in addition to being receivers of policies, they are also producers of policies (Trowler, 2003). This means that the practical and cultural outcome of policies are indicated through teachers' perspectives. In other words, teachers' interpretations and experiences reflect educational cultures.

2.2.2 Teachers' Perspectives

Teachers' perspectives are considered as important to improve policy and practice in education (Bray, 2007), in this study this specifically involves teachers' interpretations and experiences of equality and individual needs. That teachers interpret policies differently and adapt according to their context (Trowler, 2003) is not surprising. It is also reasonable to believe that cultural context influences their understandings of pedagogical practice. This is confirmed by the idea of *habitus* (2.1.4), which is useful to explain how teachers develop according to their cultural dispositions. Teachers' ideas are located within a particular cultural context and their perceptions of the world are determined by their background and experiences. In other words, the English and Norwegian teachers understand equality and individual need provision according to their cultural context. This makes it likely that English teachers' perspectives will have differences as well as similarities compared to Norwegian perspectives.

2.2.3 Individual Needs

Provision of education for all is not a new idea and was formalised as an aim by 92 governments and 25 international organisations in The Salamanca Statement in 1994 (UNESCO). The provision for special needs is often related to students with academic difficulties, but differs from the concept of individual needs that involves a broader approach.

While inclusion is broadly defined as access and integration to academics (Kluth, Straut and Biklen, 2003), the concept of special need is more specific in provision of learning difficulties (Farrell, M., 2003). The concept of special need is problematic especially in one particular aspect; the exclusion of high achieving students. Kirk et al. (2006) make this challenge and explain that special needs should not be reserved for students with learning difficulties. They argue that the concept of special needs should include gifted students. Furthermore, the concept

of special needs excludes typically the very able (Farrell, M., 2003) and underchallenged students without learning difficulties (Kluth et al. 2003). This makes an introduction of *individual* needs useful. Individual needs apply to all students, including the talented and gifted, alongside the provision of special needs. This is supported by Engelsen (2003) who claims that all children are different and by that have different needs. Vygotsky supports this view when he claims that teaching should start on an individual basis for all (Langford, 2005). His approach represents a practical level of the political visions, and makes the concept of individual needs relevant to individual development for all, rather than only in a narrow focus on learning disabilities alone.

2.2.4 Equality

Equality is considered as equal opportunities for all, containing academic and social opportunities for high as well as low achievers (Chitty, 2001). The OECD (2004) point out the importance of equality when they claim, “school remains the only shared space among growing inequality and segregation” (p. 11).

This makes the school an important arena for equal opportunities for social and academic development. The view is further supported when Haydon (2008) describes equal education as a legislated right in addition to a human value. The legislated rights and human values represent one perspective of this study, while another perspective is the practical realisation of the concept. The dilemmas of academic diversity and different needs are obvious for the teachers that are supposed to provide individual need for all. The competition for resources is a key issue (Terzi, 2008) and it is natural that this creates tensions that affect both high and low achievers in school. While Kirk et al. (2006) take the high achievers position, arguing for their rights to explore and develop their talents through quality education, the resource dilemma is exemplified through Kenneth and Hugh:

Kenneth, who is highly talented, and Hugh, who has a serious cognitive disability.
(...). It seems that Hugh should be granted more resources, but this time it is hard to see that they should correct for the disability, unless they are willing to disable
Kenneth. (Brighouse, 2008:74)

This dilemma exemplifies the difficult practical result of such political visions. It is natural that such dilemmas have implications for teachers and their pedagogical practice. An investigation of teachers' experiences and interpretation of equality is important to reveal the dilemmas involved in providing for individual needs and to allow for further political and practical improvements.

2.2.5 Comprehensive Education

Various types of schools exist in both Norway and England where the widest range appears in England. The comprehensive school approach has a historical and contemporary position in both Norway and England, but has developed in different directions. The English approach sees comprehensive as one amongst many school types (Jones, 2008), while the Norwegian approach is historically based upon student diversity within the same school type (Baune, 2007).

Despite different developments, the comprehensive approach is defined as an ideal that struggles to embody values such as diversity, equality and provision of individual needs (Haydon, 2008). It should be mentioned that two similar concepts are used in the education literature, the comprehensive school and the common school. Some brief comments about the comprehensive school and common school are required to clarify these concepts. The common school is, like the comprehensive school based on the comprehensive ideal, but differs in the acceptance of differences between schools (Pring, 2008). The comprehensive school is, on the other hand based upon similar schools where none of them are separated or segregated from each other (Haydon, 2008). In spite of this, the similarities are evident in the comprehensive ideal of diversity, equality and individual need provision (Ball, 2008; Engelsen, 2003; Jones, 2008). These aspects are also significant in this study and make the traditional use of comprehensive approach reasonable. It is further underlined that the degree of the comprehensive ideal might differ (Haydon, 2008), but that the core values of diversity, equality and individual need provision are standard issues emphasised in the comprehensive (Chitty, 2001) as well as the common school (Haydon, 2008).

2.3 Summary

This chapter has argued that factors such as policy, culture and practice interact and influence the provision of individual needs through different layers society and education systems. Three theories are also presented (2.1). Habermas is represented in terms of his critical theory and arguments for the importance of communication between policymakers and practitioners. He is further used to give teachers a voice in the communication and influence to policymaking. The second theory is based upon Vygotsky and his socio-cultural theory. His explanations of teachers as a result of cultural contexts and their use of cultural tools to student development are of interest in this study. Bourdieu represents the third theory with his use of concepts to describe cultural power. His use of *habitus* and *field* are especially relevant to this study. The second section of this chapter (2.2) contains an explanation of the relevant concept for this

study. These concepts are; culture, teachers' perspectives, individual needs, equality and comprehensive education. Further investigations of these concepts are found in chapter three, the literature review.

3 Literature Review

This chapter contains an overview of the current literature of relevance to this study. The aim is to present and discuss significant aspects of this study. The chapter is structured in six sections; recent historical overview (3.1); comprehensive school (3.2); equality (3.3); individual need (3.4); teachers' perspectives (3.5); culture (3.6).

3.1 Historical Overview

Education is embedded in culture (Hahn, 2006) and this makes it natural to believe that education systems develop according to values, norms and traditions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). The post WW2 period was, despite national differences, focused on education as a significant factor in rebuilding many European nations, and created a new political interest in education for all through the comprehensive school approach (Heyneman, 2003).

Comprehensive school issues are discussed in terms of the contemporary England (Ball, 2008) as well as Norway (Engelsen, 2003) and it is also important to briefly outline historical overview of the nations' educational systems.

The English and Norwegian education systems both have backgrounds of schooling in church environments, where access was restricted to the wealthiest families (Ball, 2008; Baune, 2007). The first national distinctions between the countries were already evident in the late 1800s. Both countries were moving in the direction of free state education, but differed in the response from the public. The Norwegian education policies were based upon a high degree of agreement (Telhaug, 2008), while the opposite situation was the case in England where dominant groups struggled to keep the private fee-paying schools (Ball, 2008). These political tendencies of Norwegian agreements and English disagreements are evident again later in the nations' educational history.

A further issue in access to schooling was the focus on individual needs provision. The tripartite system in England was supposed to cover the range of students' individual needs and resulted in The Education Act 1944. It was argued that division between modern, grammar and technical schools was necessary in light of the reality that children had different abilities and different needs (Jones, 2008). Furthermore, while the grouping of children addressed the uniqueness of every child, it was also criticised as creating inequality between the middle and working class (Tomlinson, 2005). In this concern, The Education Act 1944 set out universal

and free education for all but was also criticised to be a social class project, creating advantage for the middle class (Ball, 2008). The dissatisfaction with the 1944 Act maintained a comprehensive school discussion focused on the failure in providing equal opportunities rather than school access (Jones, 2008). The comprehensive schools were also discussed in Norwegian policies, but developed in the opposite direction, emphasising access for all (Engelsen, 2003) and equality (Eriksen, 1993). The provision for individual needs was also emphasised in the curriculum of 1939 (Engelsen, 2003). The political agreement behind a comprehensive school policy in Norway was clear (Dale, 2008a), in contrast to the political conflicts that appeared in England (Jones, 2008).

In spite of several similarities in policies, English and Norwegian policies have taken different directions. The Norwegian social-democratic policy represents egalitarian priorities through tuition-free schools and access for all, based on a Welfare state ideology (Eriksen, 1993; Tjeldvoll, 1998). The Norwegian values of access for all and equality are by this evident, while English discussion of equality led to quite different results. Not only was the maintenance of grammar and private schools in conflict with a comprehensive school system, but it was also defended by an expanding middle class (Jones, 2008). The golden age of capitalism dominated the English society from the 1950s onwards and gave new opportunities for many (Jones, 2008). A result of this was the evident and increased social, financial and cultural polarisations of society (Jones, 2008). The English state was beset by financial problems that reduced the collectivist initiatives and a Welfare state ideology (Ball, 2008). At the same time, it is interesting that steps to compromise and agree about the core values of the society dominated the Norwegian policies. This was evident through the combination of capital, market and state driven policies (Telhaug, 2008). In addition, education was considered as a main tool to achieve the core value of integrating all in a national fellowship (Telhaug, 2008).

The English election in 1979 is considered as a crucial point for the idea of comprehensive school education. The conservative period from 1979-1997, widely referred to as defined by Thatcherism, is a poor chapter in the provision of comprehensive schools, which saw education benefit the middle class rather than offer equal opportunities (Ball, 2008; Simon, 2001). This was evident through the critique of the state and deconstruction of collective provision, but also the new ideology of Victorian, laissez-faire individualism (Ball, 2008). Within education, this resulted in more market freedom and competition, where parents got the opportunity to choose schools for their children amongst state options (Ball, 2008), but also various types of elite education for well financed parents (Jones, 2008). In Norway, the situation was different. The

ideas of inclusion and likeness dominated education policies (Engelsen, 2003) and resulted in teaching the same content to all (Baune, 2007). In 1997 The New Labour government won the British election. A stronger focus on the comprehensive schools was expected, but New Labour did not fulfil their educational promises due to their repositioning towards the Right and abandoned the comprehensive approach (Simon, 2001). These political visions and values are examples of national and international tensions and differences that influence education development, and confirm the opposite educational values and directions between England and Norway. While in England inequality has taken a strong cultural form (Jones, 2008), the opposite is evident in Norway where approximately 98 percent attend public schools (SSB, 2009).

3.2 Comprehensive Schools

The comprehensive school traditions can be linked back to 1850-1900 in both Norway and England. The first initiatives towards a comprehensive school education in Norway was the change from “allmueskole” to “folkeskolen” in the 1850s (Baune, 2003), while the 1870 and 1902 Acts represented a new direction for English education (Ball, 2008). Education was now not only considered to be a middle class privilege, but one which should also include working class children (Ball, 2008). The Norwegian curriculum of 1939 and the English Education Act 1944 created a renaissance for the comprehensive school approach (Engelsen, 2003; Jones, 2008) and are discussed in this section, in terms of intentions they set out for a comprehensive school approach.

Intentions of the Comprehensive Schools

The post WW2 period was characterised by the rebuilding of several nations and during this time the comprehensive school approach was a significant political initiative (Heyneman, 2003). Education policies were used to support social policies in England as can be exemplified by policies for educational equality as a response to social injustice (Pring, 2008). Education was considered to be fundamental for rebuilding society. The same focus was evident in Norway where the comprehensive school model was used as a tool for the equalisation of social class differences (Tjeldvoll, 1998) and to further the Welfare state (Telhaug, 2008). Furthermore, parental choice maintained segregation by socio-economic background in the English education system (Brighouse, 2008), even while education policy was intended to decrease the level of segregation (Pring, 2008).

The comprehensive school approach should be based on the idea that all children have talents and abilities (Chitty, 2001) and that everyone can live harmoniously together despite of social class and ethnicity (Pring, 2008). In Norway, equal opportunities was the educational intentions (Engelsen, 2003), but resulted in the same education for all (Dale, 2008a). English education policies focused upon common culture rather than cultural background (Haydon, 2008) and aimed for social justice, equality and diversity (Pring, 2008). Education's use as a tool to create social justice was also evident in Norway and was further followed up by a focus upon common values and traditions (Engelsen, 2003). Shared beliefs, values and understanding were also focused on in England, to provide students with a cultural inheritance (Pring, 2008) and reduce selection (Haydon, 2008). The intentions of building a common culture have also been criticised as a narrow and exclusive approach. First of all, if it is acknowledged that humans have different values and traditions, which lead to different needs an education system based on a common culture is not able to provide the wide spectrum of diversity needed, and will tend to result in exclusion of some values and traditions (Reich, 2008). That view of exclusion is further supported by Pihl (1999) who claims that values and traditions in a pluralistic society are excluded in a comprehensive school approach. It is further claimed that student diversity harms the most advantaged students without bringing benefits for the low achievers (Brighouse, 2008).

These critiques of the comprehensive school approach make it reasonable to question if the results of these policies have been as intended. It has been claimed that educational reforms have limits in what can be accomplished, have been considered to be ineffective in reducing the social class gap (Jonsson, 1999). These issues are also relevant when Brighouse (2008) claims that schools based on socio-economic differences have trade-offs in terms of equality. Furthermore, he raises the dilemma of how improvements in teaching and learning might have bad effects on equality (Brighouse, 2008). These critiques require an explanation of how and why the Norwegian students historically got the same education (Dale, 2008a) in a society with lack of hierarchy (Eriksen, 1993). This view appears to be a contradiction to the belief in humans as naturally divided and having different needs. It is argued that educational choice should be a response to pluralism rather than common schooling (Reich, 2008), and that a comprehensive school approach is unable to provide for all needs, which results in lower achievement for some students (Brighouse, 2008). There are several explanations for this, but it is interesting that the comprehensive school idea of diversity (Haydon, 2008) has been unable to fulfil the aim of equality. In other words, the comprehensive school idea often fails because full diversity reduces the quality of teaching and learning (Reich, 2008). This makes it reasonable to question if the aim of diversity is an advantage or obstacle to the comprehensive school

approach. It is argued that liberal democratic states emphasise pluralism and individuals' rights to choose (Reich, 2008) and that equality is the freedom from the state and freedom to choose (Brighouse, 2008). This means that tolerance of differences in education should increase and that education should not be neutral in aim or outcome (Reich, 2008). In addition to this, it is pointed out that the comprehensive school model aimed to raise the standard for all but has failed (Simon, 2001). Furthermore, it is claimed that the comprehensive school is in need of new solutions adapted to the postmodern rather than the modern time (Engelsen, 2003).

3.3 Equality

The concept of equality has many aspects, but some basic understandings of the concept are essential. One basic understanding can be illustrated by a metaphor of dividing and sharing out a cake, as described below:-

It may specify that everyone present has to have a piece of cake of the same size, or it may devise some way of proportioning the size of the piece to the person, either matching size for size, or inventing a measure of greater hunger or greater need (Warnock, 2006:1).

The illustration does not question if all have a right to a piece of cake, but if the individual needs are the same. The same issues appear within the educational context. Everyone has the right to education, but do all need the same education and the same knowledge? Another issue is also how equal education is to be provided. How the cake is divided *within* the schools is relevant for the Norwegian context, while the English context is more concerned of how the cake is divided between *social classes*.

Norway

The comprehensive school approach has a strong position in the Norwegian education system. A common focus in several curricula has been the issue of equality (Engelsen, 2003) and is also emphasised in the present *core curriculum* (KUF, 1997). The political focus on equality is well established, and a further investigation to reveal the meaning and content of the concept is required.

The Norwegian understanding of equality has long traditions and roots (Baune, 2007), so a historical perspective is useful to understand the concept. It can be argued that the comprehensive school vision started with "folkeskolen" around 1850, and was highlighted again in mass education in 1950s (Baune, 2007). If it is questioned why a comprehensive school

approach was chosen rather than others, it seems that this better suited the rebuilding of national welfare (Heyneman, 2003) and social cohesion (Dale, 2008a). It is also claimed that the original establishment of the comprehensive school was based on the creation of equality, homogeny and unity rather than diversity (Strømstad, Nes and Skogen, 2004). The issue of difference was in other words declined, but confirmed by the idea that all students should be united in one class and taught the same content through compulsory schooling (Baune, 2007). This indicates that equality was linked to beliefs in homogeny and unity. It is reasonable to question if the situation is the same today, and a historical overview of the Norwegian curricula confirms the political emphasis on teaching the same content in the same class, rather than efforts to differentiate in groups (Engelsen, 2003). This issue is further discussed by Dale (2008b) who explains that the Norwegian schools are able to integrate students in terms of *access*, but not in beneficial academic *learning* processes. Students have in other words equality of access and financing (Tjeldvoll, 1998), but the belief in homogeneity and entity dominate the interpretations and practice of equality. In this case, it is interesting that Bech (2000) explains how individuals are ignored at the expense of collectivism, while Baune (2007) claims that all Norwegian students are intended to learn the same content in the same speed. This makes natural implications for the special need education. First of all, it is unrealistic that special need students should progress in the same speed with the same content as the regular class, but if so is the aim, a comprehensive school approach is dependent on well-functioning special need provision (Strømstad et al., 2004). In contrast, the idea of teaching the same content with all students in the same class dominates practice (Baune, 2007).

The Norwegian meaning and content of the concept equality tend towards homogeny, unity and likeness. The interpretations and practice of the concept were further criticised, especially in the 1970s, and such discussions resulted in 1974 in an attempt of clarifying the concept in four different aspects of equality; equality in legislations; equality of resources; equality of competence; equality of results (Engelsen, 2003). The latter clarification was an aim to compensate for students' different abilities and further maximise individual development (Baune, 2007). One dilemma appears from this; it should be an aim to achieve equal results, but at the same time maximise individual development. It is likely that high achievers will develop faster, while low achievers develop slower and the academic gap between them will get bigger. This means that fulfilment of equal results depend on slower development of high achievers, so that the low achievers can reach approximately the same level. All will, in other words, have the same knowledge and this will work as an obstacle to high achievers' development. In the following of this, it is interesting that Baune (2007) refers to the Norwegian researcher Seeberg

(2003), which confirms this understanding of equality. She underlines how the ideal of likeness in Norwegian schools is so strong that teachers are not able to handle student differences. The Norwegian schools have realised an ideal of likeness rather than the vision of equality (Baune, 2007; Engelsen, 2003). The contradiction between likeness and equality is further supported by Telhaug (2008) when he describes the contemporary situation as slightly more individualised, but still dominated by the idea of likeness. Furthermore, the idea of equality has been challenged by the demands of quality and individualisation within education (Tjeldvoll, 1998). In this case, it is interesting when Engelsen (2003) quotes Lønning (2001) in his description of the comprehensive school. He claims that the comprehensive school “functions as an ideological strait jacket that in practice (...) makes it difficult for the schools to achieve the vision of equal education for all students” (p. 17²).

England

The English education system can be characterised as diverse in terms of school types and choices. The choice of schools has been linked to benefits for middle class families, while the working class opportunities have been more limited. The post WW2 period also saw emphasis on the issue of equality and can be considered as a time of equalising opportunity (Tomlinson, 2005). The Education Act 1944 underlined the right to secondary education for all (Jones, 2008), but the concept of equality has more aspects than simply school access.

First of all, the degree of equality considered as a significant indicator of a country's success (Wolff, 2006). If so, clarifications of equality are important to create beneficial policies. According to Warnock (2006), equality can be divided in two aspects; first, students' rights to a certain amount of education; second, students' opportunities to get more education if it is wanted. This interpretation does in other words put a minimum level of education, while those who want extra education should be provided that. A natural consequence of this is the need to define the 'right amount' of education. Should all students receive the same amount and content of education? Or should it be adjusted according to individual needs? The latter perspective is further discussed when Young and Spours (2006) argue that individual opportunities and challenges should be increased in school. They argue that a common vision between schools, colleagues and workplaces has been missing and that practitioners have been absent in implementation processes. They do claim that political priorities should be related to practice,

² My translation

while Davison (2004) underlines how official education documents are based upon and benefits the elite.

The lack of common visions is also discussed by Halsey (2006) when he explains equality as a clash between values and priorities of different groups. He brings up the example of Britain's failure to realise egalitarian education, and explains how the Victorian time defined social class, functions and education through culture and character. The concept of equality has in other words been historically abolished in a society where high and low culture determined education possibilities. Furthermore, the concept of equality has been shaped by a society without a sharp line between economics and sociology (Halsey, 2006). A result of this is, as mentioned above, a clash between values and priorities, and it is natural to believe that the economic aspect has the power to decrease the implementation of equality. The balancing of capitalism and socialism was also a relevant issue in the election of the Labour Party in 1997 and The Third Way policy (Tomlinson, 2005). Inequality is further considered as a fulfilment of capitalism (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2009), social exclusion and a contradiction to the Welfare system design (Tomlinson, 2005). The English middle class has benefited from excluding the disadvantaged, opposing the egalitarian ideas and has secured private education and school choice (Tomlinson, 2005). This affects equality as a diversity of schools, and cannot create equal opportunities because the natural consequence is a ranking hierarchy of schools (Chitty, 2001).

While the middle class argued that access for all could reduce the quality of schooling for their own children (Halsey, 2006), Jones (2008) argues that equality is related to educational structure and explains how the middle class benefits by absence of structure, while the opposite is evident for the working class. A natural concern to equality is by this the appearance or absence of an educational structure, as for example a national comprehensive structure. It can be claimed that the middle class maintained an educational structure which suited them through the tripartite system and benefited from the market approach (Tomlinson, 2005). In addition, the realisation of school equality is problematic when the middle class secure their opportunities through grammar schools rather than access for all (Jones, 2008). The inequality in school choice has further developed to take a cultural form (Jones, 2008) and created academic segregation where middle class parents have higher expectations and influence on education (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2009). The middle class understands that knowledge leads to power and that they further benefit from maintaining inequality (Halsey, 2006). Mass politics is becoming middle class politics (Tomlinson, 2005), social hierarchies are reproduced (Gewirtz & Cribbs, 2009) and class inequalities are maintained (Heath & Jacobs, 1999).

3.4 Individual Needs

The Salamanca Statement stated that all children should have access to schools, and further that students' differences should be celebrated within education (UNESCO, 1994). While school access is emphasised in the statement, development for all students is outlined in the curricula of England and Norway (KUF, 1997; QCDA, 2007a). One response from schools has been to identify and provide individual needs for all, but also acknowledge that this affects teachers' practice (Capel, Leask and Turner, 2005). A search through the literature on individual needs shows a wide spectrum in *how* to provide for individual needs for special groups, while there appears to be a gap in the literature regarding the *meanings* and *interpretations* of the concept. In other words, the literature presents different approaches to individual need, though there is little or no literature which expressly discusses the meaning of the concept.

The concept of individual need can be interpreted in several ways. Students in lower secondary school have their needs defined according to what is considered normal achievement (Capel et al., 2005), while Strømstad et al. (2004) underline that no individual is abnormal. Social and cultural background is further stated as a significant factor shaping individual potential and the determination of individual needs (Lowe, 2005) and this supports the view of diversity as an important issue. In other words, social background determines students' individual need. A logical response to this is that the environment must adjust to the individuals, rather than individuals to the environment (Lowe, 2005). This approach is not unproblematic. All children are different and have different needs (Engelsen, 2003), and a consequence is that students' responsibilities are removed by leaving the responsibility of adjustments to the environment. According to this approach, the responsibility of adjustments is located towards the environment rather than the students themselves.

One approach to provide for individual need is through ability group organising. This can be achieved through differentiation of activity according to individual abilities, but can also place emphasis on assessments of need. The idea that all students have different needs is maintained, but organised to narrow the spectrum of needs in every group. This approach can be used in grouping students across the school or within the class (Lowe, 2005), but it is interesting to see that this conflict fundamentally with Norwegian beliefs on individual need provision. It is argued that organising ability groups goes against the fundamental human value and represents an individual, rather than society, paradigm at work (Strømstad et al., 2004). It can also be argued that humans are not equally valued where education is organised in ability sets. This

perspective brings up another understanding of individual need provision. The latter argument measure human value according to how students are organised, rather than an acceptance of differences in qualification levels. This means that students are valued according to how they are organised rather than on the basis of the same human value for all. Furthermore, the issue that a wide-spectrum of group or class can be an obstacle to both high and low achievers' development (Engelsen, 2003) is not taken into consideration. This makes it natural to question if all students' individual needs can be provided for in the absence of ability grouping. It is further argued that the concept of individual needs is linked to special need education students, and this excludes a focus on high achievers (Farrell, M., 2003). A response to this exclusion could be to define very able students as special need students, to provide them with the same rights as low achievers (Kirk et al., 2006). This view is supported in the idea of equal opportunities for all to develop individual skills and talents (Dale, Wærness and Lindvig, 2005). Another perspective on equal opportunities is based on the allocation to resources. Competition for resources is evident within schooling (Terzi, 2008) and this is not surprising, but does require some consideration. Equal opportunities should not be interpreted as requiring that the same resources are allocated to all, but that they should be allocated according to the individual needs and not at expense of others (Brighouse, 2008).

3.5 Teachers' Perspectives

Investigation of the classrooms is important to improve policy and practice (Bray, 2007). Teachers' perspectives differ from policy makers (Kennedy, 2005), so their representation of the practical level of teaching should have a natural place in policymaking (Trowler, 2003). It is argued that the value of teacher research has increased (Loughran, 2002), but at the same time teachers' professional influence on policy and practice has diminished (Gewirtz, Mahony, Hextall and Cribb, 2009). The literature related to teachers is diverse and is often focused on content (McLaughlin, 2002) and subject-specific aspects of teaching (Hagger & McIntyre, 2006), rather than *teachers' perspectives*. This lack of literature from teacher perspectives represents a literature gap (Kennedy, 2005).

Teachers' perspectives in this study demonstrate their interpretations and experiences of equality and individual needs. This brings in the issue of how teachers define their professionalism in relation to their ability to address the needs of disadvantaged children (Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler, 2009). The practice of addressing needs can nevertheless be questioned when teachers explain educational ideals as unrealistic (Kennedy, 2005) and that

teaching often not is operationalised (Kompf & Brown, 2005). In other words, the professionalism of teachers is linked to the aim of addressing individual needs, but this is often not fulfilled in practice. Furthermore, it is claimed that teachers put a high priority on equality and individual need provision, but that even the best-run classrooms can create problems for the teachers in achieving this provision (Kennedy, 2005). In this way, teachers are dissatisfied with their ability to provide student learning, but do also outline creating classroom routines, planning and responsibility for learning outcome as problematic issues (Kennedy, 2005). In other words, all classrooms have potential to create problems. Furthermore, these views of teachers underlined one factor especially as problematic; the increasing focus on inclusion and individual need provision (Lowe, 2005). It is further explained that inclusion often result in a lack of time to focus on individual students and that teachers with special needs students in their class have especially serious problems (Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington and Gu, 2007). The same study further concludes that special needs students should be excluded from mainstream classes and that more teachers are required, along with more collaboration with health and social services. A teacher from another study explains that teaching is difficult and that some lectures would be chaos without a support assistant (Adey, Hewitt, G., Hewitt, J. and Landau, 2004), while other teachers feel there is an implementation gap in the practice of personalised learning (Courcier, 2007). The teacher role is also questioned when teachers define their role as a welfare officer rather than a teacher (Gleeson et al., 2009). The same teachers explain that role as a result of social policies within the educational field. They are further, as a result of this, concerned that they will lose their professional identity and status.

Teachers also emphasise that personal knowledge and skills shape their practice (Hagger & McIntyre, 2006), but that teachers therefore need continuous professional development (Denicolo & Pope, 2005). The educational ideal requires high qualifications and opportunities for further professional development. Lack of this professional development can be illustrated by a recent study of teacher graduates' experiences. These newly graduated teachers came into teaching with a desire to make a difference to others, but lack of time and opportunity to learn from colleagues reduced their motivation dramatically (Day et al., 2007). In addition, it is argued that while further development can be achieved through colleague collaboration (Day et al., 2007), the bureaucratisation of the tutor role decreases time for such development (Gleeson et al., 2009). Another negative factor identified by teachers is dissatisfaction with teaching materials (Imsen, 2004). It should be mentioned that the value and significance of teaching materials has been difficult to establish through research, but low education budgets and dysfunctional school buildings are possible explanations dissatisfaction (Imsen, 2004). To

summarise, the lack of teaching materials and time for collaboration add to teachers' sense of being expected to live up to unrealistic ideals, exemplified by the principle of inclusion and changing role from teachers to welfare officers.

3.6 Culture

In socio-cultural theory, Vygotsky claims that all people are influenced by culture (Daniels, 2001), while Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) explain culture as common values, norms, heritage and traditions. Furthermore, culture is not considered to be in people's mind (Fuchs, 2001), but does shape their minds (Wells & Claxton, 2002). In other words, culture influences and shapes personal identities (Pring, 2008).

As education is embedded in culture (Hahn, 2006), schools and education are used in cultural politics (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Education therefore has a significant role within culture and it is natural that schools are used to produce and reproduce values, norms, heritage and traditions. Furthermore, it is argued that cultural creations are produced and networks established by people with the same histories and experiences (Feinberg, 2008). Based upon this, it is natural to believe that Norwegian and English teachers have developed differently according to national cultures.

The English secondary schools have a tradition of diverse structures (Cummings, 2003), but also traditions related to individualism which have historic roots (Ball, 2008). As teachers are influenced by culture (Trowler, 2003), it is likely that teachers' perspectives are influenced according to such national cultural dispositions. A result of this is that English teachers are influenced by the traditions of individualism, while Norwegian teachers are influenced by collectivism. The emphasis on likeness, unity and universality represents significant Norwegian social-democratic values (Telhaug, 2008). In addition, these egalitarian priorities are evident through access for all and tuition free schools. In England, the situation is different. The English education system is highly influenced by the market approach and parental choice (Jones, 2008). A result of this is an environment where competition leads to exclusion of students (Ball, 2008) and where inequality has taken on a cultural form (Jones, 2008). Based upon these national differences, it is likely that English and Norwegian teachers experience education differently according to their established cultures.

Following on from this it is important to focus on how individualism and collectivism are evident in pedagogical practice. Two approaches are of particular interest; first, personalised learning; second, adjusted teaching. The English education system has traditions of encouraging individual talents (McLean, 1995), which indicate a personal focus in contrast to the Norwegian approach of teaching the same content for all (Baune, 2007). In addition, the Norwegian idea of adjusted teaching is considered to be a main principle in Norwegian teaching (Dale et al., 2005) and was underlined as late as 2004 in the white paper *Kultur for læring* (KD, 2004). Adjusted teaching is described as acknowledgement of differences, but tends to be interpreted as adjustments towards common goals and content (Engelsen, 2003). Based upon this gap between intention and interpretation, it is reasonable to believe that the values of common goals and content are culturally derived. In comparison, the English focus on personalised learning represents another culture of teaching. Personalised learning is considered to be a cultural movement based on the idea of education markets (Hartley, 2009) and a personal focus is also linked towards child-centred education (Hartley, 2007). As a result of this, a culture of self-centeredness and individualisation is created within English education (Hartley, 2009), but also an emphasis on equal and beneficial opportunities for learning (Courcier, 2007). The cultural differences between England and Norway are illustrated through the approaches of adjusted teaching and personalised learning. In light of this, it is natural to believe that teachers' cultural experiences will have influenced their understandings and perspectives on education.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has discussed literature of relevance to this study. The six sections of historical overview (3.1), comprehensive school (3.2), equality (3.3), individual need (3.4), teachers perspectives (3.5) and culture (3.6) have been outlined and is summarised as follows:-

- The English and Norwegian education systems have historic similarities in changing from church environments to state driven systems, but political differences developed the education systems in different directions, mainly represented by Norwegian state driven versus English market driven situations.
- The comprehensive school approach has two main functions; social functions and academic functions. In spite of this, it is questionable whether it can fulfil the requirements of contemporary society, especially in terms of pluralism.

- English and Norwegian education policies emphasise the principle of equality, but differ in their interpretations of this concept. The Norwegian focus is located towards school unity, likeness and teaching the same content for all, while the English emphasises the provision of a qualitative, beneficial education for all, based upon equal opportunities and students' rights.
- Lack of literature in individual need provision represents a gap in the *meaning* of the concept. A main difference between Norway and England is, however, that Norwegian individual need provision is located within the same class, while it in England is based upon ability grouping.
- Teachers' perspectives represent a second literature gap. Even though, several issues, such as unrealistic ideologies, the principle of inclusion, lack of collaboration and materials are outlined as problematic in practice. In addition, teachers question the changing role from teachers to welfare officers.
- Education is embedded in culture, which influences teachers' perspectives. The Norwegian education culture is based upon the idea of collectivism, while the English education culture represents individualism.

4 Methodology

This chapter of research design is divided into 4 sections. Research questions (4.1) and research design (4.2) describe methodological choices that define the empirical work. The section on reliability and objectivity (4.3) focus upon the researchers trustworthiness and the choice of analysis approach is explained in the final section (4.4).

The research design involves some important issues in any study as it defines and sets limits on the study, as well as creating possibilities in epistemology and ontology. That human beings are seen as creators of the social world defines this study within the paradigms of interpretivism and constructionism (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and therefore as different to natural science. An aim of the study is to construct theories through research, and defines the use of an inductive approach guided by the topic of teachers' perspectives and experiences of equality and individual need provision.

4.1 Research Questions

- What are teachers' interpretations and experiences of equality and provision of individual needs in the Norwegian and English education systems?
- What are the main differences and similarities in the approach of meeting individual needs in English and Norwegian education policies?
- What influence does culture have upon the implementation of education policy in England and Norway, and in particular, the concepts of equality and individual need?

4.2 Research Design

4.2.1 Sampling

This section describes the sampling related this study. The section contains two subheadings; country and city; institution.

Country and City

The research was carried out through narrative semi-structured interviews in England and Norway, represented by the cities of Bradford and Oslo. England and Norway were chosen because of their historical emphasis on a comprehensive school approach, but also because their educational policies have developed in different directions. A fuller explanation of this issue is given in chapter five, *cultural background*. Bradford and Oslo were purposively chosen as a result of their comparability. Bradford has a population of 478 000 (Bradford metropolitan district council, 2009a) and Oslo of 580 000 (Oslo kommune, utviklings- og kompetansetaten, 2009). The public transport system in Bradford is based upon rail and bus (Visit Bradford, n.d.), while Oslo uses subway, boat and tram systems (Ruter, 2008). Both cities have a motorway network. A range of arts and museums are common priorities in their cultural lives (Bradford metropolitan district council, 2009b; Oslo kommune, kulturetaten, 2009a). Bradford emphasises heritage areas (Bradford metropolitan district council, 2009c), while Oslo underlines the building of a cultural area in Bjørvika (Oslo kommune, kulturetaten, 2009b). Modern engineering and technology characterise the industry in Bradford (Free Index, 2009), while Oslo has put in effort to develop industry within maritime, energy and environment, technology, life science and cultural sectors (Oslo Teknopol, 2009). Both cities emphasise educational equality and individual need provision in societies showing cultural diversity (Bradford metropolitan district council, 2009d; Oslo kommune, byrådsavdeling for kultur og utdanning, 2009; Oslo kommune, utdanningsetaten, 2009).

Institution

The research was based on 4 lower secondary state schools with a comprehensive approach to schooling, 2 in England and 2 in Norway. Different socio-economical areas were selected in both countries. Purposive sampling was used to define areas in terms of socio-economic status, while random sampling was used to choose schools and teachers within these different areas. Furthermore, random sampling was used to increase information richness (Patton, 2002). One school was chosen from an area of high socio-economic status, while the second was chosen from a low socio-economic area. The same procedure was carried out in both cities. The rate of free school meals was used as indicator of socio-economic status in Bradford (DCSF, 2004a), while rate of income was used as indicator in Oslo (SSB, 2008).

The size of the schools was between 600-1800 students, and English schools are generally larger in size. The English schools have secondary level education between the ages of 11-18 (Brock & Alexiadou, 2008), while the secondary level in Norway is organised in two different ways;

schools from the ages of 6 to 16 [*primary and lower secondary school*] and schools for ages 13-16 [*lower secondary stage*] (Werler & Sivesind, 2008). Both of them are represented in this study. This study focuses upon the comprehensive school approach of diversity, equal opportunities and individual needs and therefore excludes private, religious and special need schools. The lower secondary level was chosen because assessments and grades are parts of teachers' and students' daily life. In addition, grades determine future possibilities in preparations to GCSEs and A-levels in England, and further educational entrance in both countries.

4.2.2 Participants

The study is based on 19 teachers with experience from lower secondary teaching. Teachers with experience were chosen to higher the probability of reflection related to the research questions, which are focused on interpretations and experiences. In addition, random sampling of teachers and core subjects were chosen to increase the richness of data (Patton, 2002). In total 7 men and 12 women took part, of whom were 9 English and 10 Norwegians. Their core subjects were as follows:-

English Participants

Language (English and French)

ICT

Drama

Physical Education

Mathematics

Dance

History

Media

Norwegian Participants

Mathematics

Social Science

Language (English, French and Norwegian)

Special Needs

Art

Music

Religious studies

Media

Furthermore, random sampling was used to represent a diversity of subjects rather than match subjects across nations. The results are not intended to be generalised or be representative for each subject, but indicate teachers' experiences and interpretations of equality and individual need provision across nations, socio-economic areas and subjects.

4.2.3 Materials

Digital recorder, pedals and ExpressScribe transcription software; personal computer and printer. 2 letters of request, 1 in English and 1 in Norwegian (appendix B & C); ethical guidelines, 1 in English and 1 in Norwegian (appendix D & E); 2 interview schedules, 1 in English and 1 in Norwegian (appendix F & G). A coding schedule was used in the interview analyses (appendix H).

Development of Interview Schedule

The interview schedule had a narrative semi – structured approach and was dominated by open questions, based upon themes such as policy, culture and the practice of equality and individual need provision in school. Narrative semi-structured interviews were chosen as methodology to allow for a detailed investigation (Bryman, 2008) and give the teachers a voice (Husu, 2002) in meeting individual needs and equality. In spite of limitations in terms of generalisation, a qualitative study is preferred to investigate individual and personal experiences rather than standardised questions that only tap the surface (Patton, 2002). Meeting individual need is considered as a complex issue (Hodkinson & Smith 2004), which makes a narrative semi-structured interview approach a natural choice to reveal and draw a detailed picture of the complexity on the practical levels.

Interview questions were developed thematically from the research questions and aimed to explore participants' histories, opinions and meanings. In addition, the questions were created to generate explanations and preferences, while probes were used to follow up questions and increase flexibility in interviews (Bryman, 2008). The development of the interview schedule was based upon Kvale & Brinkmann (2009). Based on this, the first interview stage contained elements of an introduction and took a wide approach, to make the interviewees comfortable and to build a relationship and trust. The next stage involved open questions and raised

dilemmas about equality and individual need provision. Active listening, encouraging and probing influenced this stage. The last stage involved reflecting, drawing out a summary and steps for closure. Two pilot studies were carried out to make adjustments to the guide and practice and build confidence for the interview situation (Gillham, 2000). The interviews were planned to last approximately 30 minutes with focus on policy, culture and practice. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Topics covered by the interviews were as follows:-

- Individual needs
- Individual potential
- Equality
- Diversity
- National and international education policies
- Teacher values
- Resources
- Student categorisation
- Classroom and student characteristics

4.2.4 Procedure

The procedure for the research was a 3-stage process, as illustrated below:

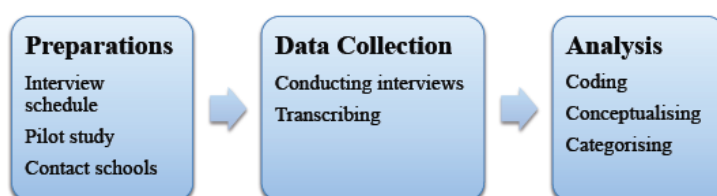


Figure 5. Research procedure.

Preparations

Following the pilot study, preparations were made to contact schools in both England and Norway in writing. Contact letters and information about the study allowing letter of request and ethical guidelines. This contact was important to provide with participants the information needed to make a decision to attend or not (Bryman, 2008). Setting up times for visits and interviews along with a travel schedule was based on responses from the schools. The rate of response was low, so many more schools than needed were contacted to safeguard against cancellations, illness or other challenges. Ethical guidelines (appendix D & E) were sent to the

schools in advance of the interviews, and a digital recorder and interview schedule were used during the interviews. The ethical guidelines were based upon the national committees for research ethics in Norway (NESH, 2006).

Data Collection

How the interviews were conducted varied to some extent, depending on the different contexts in England and Norway. Cultures in education and schools are different in the two countries, and were taken into consideration during the conduct of interviews. In order to put the interviewees at their ease, the author was careful to note the dress code of the country and to dress accordingly. The interviews had a range from 25 – 60 minutes and were organised in between teachers' lectures and meetings, which imposed time limits on some interviews.

The interviews in Bradford were carried out in June and July 2009, the last months before the summer vacation in England. In other words, this was a time focused on academic and social results and the update of grades. This time of year is also a time for reports and documentation, and it is natural to believe that teachers put extra emphasis on evaluation of students' progress during this time. The interviews in Oslo were carried out in October and November, 2009. This is the second and third month of teaching in Norway after the summer vacation. This was thought to be a more suitable time than directly after the vacation, as it is natural to believe that teachers would be settled and starting to plan future aims and goals for their students. In these periods, the questions of equality and individual need provision were expected to be prominent parts of the teachers' daily lives. This was confirmed from the high level of reflection in response to the interview questions.

Analysis

The analyses of this study were based on grounded theory and content analysis. The processes of coding, conceptualising and categorising the data are significant in both approaches (Bryman, 2008; Patton, 2002). A coding schedule was developed to establish a systematic framework in identifying key issues and patterns in the data. The principle of saturation was fulfilled within the available data, but new data were not collected because of the time limits to this study.

4.2.5 Delimitations

That studies are determined by a variety of factors is not surprising. Bryman (2008) describes how investigations are pre-determined to some extent in the choice of research questions. He

explains that the choice of research questions guide factors such as literature, data collection and analysis. In other words, delimitations and boundaries are evident throughout the research design and priorities. This is also evident in this study. First of all, this is clear in the choice of countries, England and Norway. Second, the study is determined by epistemological and ontological priorities. The choice of a qualitative and narrative semi-structured interview approach was natural in terms of the research questions, but also must be acknowledged to leave room for potential improvement, for example through applying the principle of triangulation to include a quantitative approach and increase the number of schools, school types and participants. In addition, this would reveal different empirical realities and test data consistency (Patton, 2002).

4.2.6 Documentary Evidence

Interviews

The interview schedule was used during the interviews (appendix F & G), while the coding schedule was used in the analysis (appendix H). The interview schedule was useful to keep an overview and make sure that all main issues were covered during interviews (Bryman, 2008). The coding schedule was used to find patterns and further cluster and link codes according to themes derived from the data (Patton, 2002).

Documents

Political documents were used as background, to highlight national priorities and put data results into context. The Norwegian documents were retrieved from the Education, Research and Church Affairs (KUF), Ministry of Education and Research (KD) and Lovdata. The English documents were collected from the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), Department for Children, Schools and Families (DfES) and Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The six documents used are as follows:-

- KUF, *Core Curriculum for Primary, Secondary and Adult Education in Norway*, 1997.
- Lovdata, *Opplæringslova [The Education Act]*, 2008.
- KD, *St.melding. nr. 30 (2003-2004). Kultur for læring [Culture for learning]*, 2004.
- QCDA, *The Secondary Curriculum*, 2007a-e
- DfES, *The National Curriculum. Handbook for secondary teachers in England*, 2004
- DCSF, *Every Child Matters*, 2004b-d

4.2.7 Ethical Issues

All research involves some ethical issues, and this study is no exception. Total objectivity in interpretations in this process is impossible, but demands a struggle for confirmability (Bryman, 2008).

A narrative interview approach promotes the interviewees to tell stories, share experiences and meanings (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), in this case experiences about their own students. These kinds of stories involve personal values, preferences and choices and can feel uncomfortable. Questions about individual need provision, equality and practice touch upon participants' own values, cultures and views on human beings. That some participants would choose to refuse questions was taken into consideration, but did not appear to be a problem in practice. It was considered to be important to build trust between the interviewer and participants in the interview situation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). One step towards this was emphasising the interview as an opportunity to speak freely about issues concerning the teachers themselves, in this case mainly equality and individual need provision.

Participant scepticism can be an issue during interviews, but making participants feel safe an emphasis on confidentiality and clarifying the purpose of the research through information can reduce this (Patton, 2002). In this concern, the letters of request and ethical guidelines covered the issue of informed consent. These documents (appendix B - E) were an important tool in that matter and were used to encourage participants to talk more free and open (Bryman, 2008). The letter of request and ethical guidelines cover issues of confidentiality and ethical codes. In addition, all interviews started with information being given about storing, analysing, use and interpretation of the results. This was intended to increase the trust and confidence of the participants (Patton, 2002). The participants' answers were, in general, considered to be honest and reasonable, but awareness of how interview situations can influence answers were taken into account. Furthermore, categorisation of concepts involved a risk of fragmentation and loss of context, but awareness of context and original meanings were taken into consideration during the interpretations and analysis (Patton, 2002).

4.3 Reliability and Objectivity

Reliability and objectivity are two concepts that are subject to much discussion in qualitative research (Patton, 2002). There are no doubts of their importance, but there are questions about their meaning. Some interpretations and meanings have, in spite of critics and controversies,

been of high importance. One result of this is evident through the typical language of science. Science has traditionally emphasised objectivity, but a new language is created within constructivist and interpretivist research (Patton, 2002).

The issue of objectivity is questioned through the nature of qualitative research. It is claimed that qualitative research has to get close to the participants, but also that “distance is no guarantee of objectivity” (Patton, 2002:49). This means that objectivity has to be adapted to qualitative research. An attempt to do this is evident when Bryman (2008) explains that objectivity requires as little influence from personal biases as possible, but also that transparency should be strived for in the production of categories. He explains that the reduction of personal biases is achieved through systematic and structured analysis. Based upon that, the use of interview and coding schedules (appendix F-H) are applied in this study. It is also claimed that completely value-free inquiries are impossible. In this concern, Guba and Lincoln (2005) explain the importance of trustworthiness and fairness, which are described as balancing views, perspectives and voices. This means that all participants and stakeholders should be represented to prevent marginalisation of the data. Taking this into consideration, Patton (2002) describes that objectivity can limit the openness and nature of the research context, but also how there is a middle ground between subjectivism and objectivism. In this concern, he suggests research can be approached through emphatic neutrality, where one is aware of personal biases and theoretical dispositions, but also presents the concept of trustworthiness.

This means that the concept of trustworthiness can replace the meaning of reliability and objectivity in social research (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research is, as stated above, influenced by researchers’ backgrounds, biases and assumptions, but do also have consequences to the results (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). A reflexion and description of researchers background and assumptions are therefore a contribution to the principle of trustworthiness. The concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are all included to this (Patton, 2002). In terms of this, an awareness of coding, interpretation and context were significant factors in the analysis, while description, transparency and behaviour were important during the interviews. This study cannot make generalisations because of the qualitative approach with a small sample of in-depth interviews and lack of representativeness (Bryman, 2008).

4.4 Analysis

Grounded theory is considered to have particular relevance for interpretative studies and in-depth interviews (Patton, 2002) and is used as a framework for this study. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed based on grounded theory and content analysis, where identification and interpretation of key points and categorisation were undertaken. All research is in danger of subjective interpretations and grounded theory pays attention to more objective perspectives and patterns through coding and categorisation (Patton, 2002). The analyses procedure was as follows³:-

- Research questions
- Theoretical sampling
- Data collection
- Coding
- Concepts and categories
- Saturation
- Explore relationships between categories
- Hypotheses

The open coding process aims to categorise, conceptualise and compare data (Bryman, 2008), and was used to investigate patterns in the interviews from England and Norway. The principle of saturation was used within the existing interviews, but new sampling and collection of data were not carried out. This resulted in an adapted version of grounded theory, adjusted to the time limits of this study. An investigation based on finding patterns in the data has similarities to the process of content analysis that often is called open coding (Patton, 2002). It is argued that content analysis “is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction (...) and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002:453). This is described by Gillham (2000) as an essential focus for identifying key, substantive points, and putting them in to categories. The codes were linked and clustered together according to themes derived from the analysis. The similarities of pattern recognition, coding, categorisation and conceptualisation in grounded theory and content analysis are relevant, and is useful to go in depth and investigate teachers’ perspectives and experiences.

³ Developed from Bryman, 2008.

Narrative interviews have a potential to promote richness and insight, but has some obvious challenges because of the oral form (Patton, 2002). Interpretations of tone of voice and body language were made, as points of views that when transcribed on a paper might seem different to their original oral meaning, expressed through body language or tone of voice. Awareness of high and low inference was highly important to make a meaningful analysis. This study aimed to investigate teachers' in depth view, and that included judgements about latent meanings and interpretations of what the participants meant to say (Gillham, 2000). The skills of following up questions during the interviews cleared up some of the latent meanings and improved the interpretations of the results. In order to make a true picture of the meanings, the categorisation was comprehensive interpreted and presented. It should also be mentioned that all categories were data-driven and based on a bottom-up approach, although it is acknowledged that the interview schedule will to some extent, have influenced the focal points in the interviews, and hence, the development of categories within the data. In this regard, the categorisation was a subjective process but was safeguarded by others; peer reviews were undertaken to challenge the establishment and meanings of the categories that lead to reconstruction of categories.

4.5 Summary

The research design is based upon a qualitative inquiry, to investigate teachers' perspectives on equality and individual need provision in depth. The semi-structured narrative interview approach was chosen to encourage participants to talk openly and freely about the questions. Furthermore, the study contains purposive and random sampling. Purposive sampling was used to locate the study in comprehensive schools in two different socio-economic areas, while the use of random sampling of teachers was used to promote richness amongst teachers' perspectives. In this way, variety amongst teacher participants is prioritised rather than aiming for specific issues as subjects or gender. The analyses are based upon grounded theory and content analysis. The grounded theory is adapted according to limitations in this study. A result of this is saturation being achieved within the collected interviews, although new data was not collected. Furthermore, the open coding process was significant through the analyses. The coding was based upon a coding schedule that was helpful to create categories. The issues of reliability and objectivity have important implications for this study. The awareness of, and reduction of personal biases are considered as significant, as is the aim of transparency. The interpretation of objectivity is highly discussed in qualitative data. In this case, it is claimed that the concept of trustworthiness can be used to replace objectivity and reliability.

This chapter has outlined methodological issues. The next chapter (5) discusses the cultural differences and similarities between England and Norway.

5 Cultural Background

That education is embedded by culture (Hahn, 2006) makes some cultural considerations to this study natural. This chapter aims to contribute to the empirical data to create a better understanding of Norwegian and English education. In order to encapsulate the Norwegian and English cultures, the chapter contains five sections; why England and Norway? (5.1); geography and policy (5.2); curriculum traditions (5.3); curriculum history (5.4); education policy (5.5).

5.1 Why England and Norway?

A comparative study includes several considerations and choices and it is natural to question why two countries should be compared. In this concern, Norway and England have a mix of similarities and differences that make them interesting for a comparative study. The similarities and differences assist in the comparative process and, therefore, help in the analysis of findings and conclusions.

First of all, England and Norway are both geographically located in the northern part of Europe. Norway in the north-east (Thuesen, 2000) and England in the north-west (Budge, Crewe, McKay and Newton, 2001). The two countries are closely geographically linked, which makes it natural to believe they could have certain similarities. One of these similarities is evident through the English (Budge et al., 2001) and Norwegian (Pharo, 1993) cultural orientation towards the North-American continent. In addition, both England (Morgan, 2001) and Norway (Thuesen, 2001) are members in international bodies such as NATO, but differ in membership in the European Union. Norway has refused membership twice (Hegge, 2004), while the United Kingdom agreed to membership in 1973 (EU, n.d.). In spite of differences in EU membership, England and Norway are both considered to be capitalistic states. England developed from industrialism to capitalism through the 19th century, while Norway maintained agricultural traditions (Dunford, 1998). The rapid English industrialisation resulted in economic growth, but also created huge differences between production workers and production owners (Hardill, Graham & Kofman, 2001). In the case of Norway, the direction towards capitalism did develop through a period of industrialisation (Dunford, 1998). In spite of being wealthy capitalist states, both England and Norway have been influenced by periods of financial difficulty. Norway was one of the poorest countries in Europe at the end of 19th century (Valebrokk, 2004), while England was seriously hit by the depression in 1929 (Hardill et al., 2001). London is today

considered one of the financial centres in the world (Budge et al., 2001), while Norwegian oil production has resulted in financial stability (Valebrokk, 2004).

Another interesting issue is to what degree financial situations are reflected in the education systems. In this regard, it is interesting that Norway uses its oil revenues to invest in Welfare state related issues including state driven education (Werler & Sivesind, 2008), while English education is highly influenced by market and competitive situation (Jones, 2008). Furthermore, political consensus about the Welfare state dominated in Norway (Telhaug, 2008), while the English situation was influenced by more political tensions (Jones, 2008). The results of these different experiences can be complex, but it should be noted that the Norwegian education has developed towards equality (Baune, 2007), while social exclusion (Tomlinson, 2005) and inequality (Jones, 2008) are part of the English reality. This is further illustrated through the Norwegian political ideas about likeness and unity (Telhaug, 2008) and the English market driven and fee-paying schools that benefit the middle class (Tomlinson, 2005). In other words, the Norwegian state driven education reflects a high degree of collectivism (Telhaug, 2008), while English market driven education is directed by competitive and individualistic ideas (Ball, 2008).

5.2 Geography and Policy

This section briefly describes geographical features and the general politics of England and Norway. The aim is to discuss similarities and differences between Norway and England, but also to outline national characteristics and contexts to increase the cultural understandings of each country. Issues as population, demography, international and national political priorities are discussed.

Norway is, as stated above, located in the north-east of the Atlantic Ocean, and is a neighbour to the Eurasian continent in East (Thuesen, 2000). Norway has, by that, powerful neighbours with Russia in East and United Kingdom and United States of America in West. In the direction of West, England is considered to be the economic and demographic dominant state (Powell, 2002) in Great Britain, an island group of the north-western shore of Europe (Budge et al., 2001). England is surrounded by other territories such as Ireland, Wales and Scotland, but also is in close proximity to Europe (Budge et al., 2001). Norway is a long and narrow country and is one of the most mountainous countries in Europe (Kagda & Cooke, 2006). In addition, the demography is characterised by a thinly spread population of 13,6 persons per square kilometre

(Thuesen, 2000) and strong rural communities (Dunford, 1998). The English situation is different. England is, with an uneven distribution of people and a population of 378 persons per square kilometre, the seventh most densely populated country in the world (Hardill et al., 2001). This is illustrated through the period of 1851-1996, which represents huge urbanisation and tripling of the population in England (Peach, 2002).

In the 1900 century, England was considered to be cut off from Europe as an isolated nation, (Bernstein, 2004), but its location between two continents pulls the country in two directions, towards the American and European continents (Budge et al., 2001). The Norwegian geography also includes two directions, the border with the Soviet Union and dependence to the West led to challenges in the post WW2 and Cold War period. Due to this, Norway attempted to take on the role of building bridges in international society (Pharo, 1993). Norway focused on the benefits from a lessening of tensions, which was confirmed with their membership to United Nations in 1945 (Pharo, 1993). Furthermore, in the period between first and second world war, anti-militaristic and political military conflicts dominated and resulted in a weaker national defence, which again resulted in NATO membership in 1949 (Thuesen, 2000). NATO membership was also important for Britain and England, but their membership in 1949 was considered as a fulfilment to their already established American partnership (Morgan, 2001).

National differences between Norway and England are also evident in their international positions. In this regard, Norwegian stories of Vikings conquering new territories go back to approximately 800-1050, but it was in 1905 the country was first independent from periods under Denmark and Sweden (Kagda & Cooke, 2006). While the Vikings expanded their markets during the Viking Age (Kagda & Cooke, 2006), the English period of expansion was in the 19th century. In this period, England became the first industrial country and dominated world trade in the 1800s (Budge et al., 2001). As a result of this, the English identity took on some superiority (Bernstein, 2004), and this also led to contemporary London being one of the four financial centres in the world (Budge et al., 2001). Furthermore, the mass immigration to England (Kushner, 1994) created a multi-national state (Powell, 2002) with diversity in terms of class, race and ethnicity (Bernstein, 2004). The English industrialisation resulted in moves towards capitalism, while the Norwegians maintained their agricultural traditions (Dunford, 1998). In spite of this, Norwegian industry increased and developed towards capitalism at the same time as Russia started their industrialisation (Dunford, 1998). In other words, Norway developed towards Western capitalism rather than Russian industrialisation, but the economic development of both countries has not always been so positive. Norway was one of the poorest

European countries at the end of 19th century (Valebrokk, 2004), while England was badly hit by the depression in 1929 and was bankrupt after WW2 (Hardill et al., 2001). Following this, England struggled with high oil prices in the post-WW2 period (Morgan, 2001), while Norway experienced considerable economic freedom because of oil productions in the 1960-70s (Valebrokk, 2004). Oil production is still evident in Norway (Valebrokk, 2004), while England has a focus towards a knowledge driven economy (Jessop, 2000).

Norwegian culture is also influenced by egalitarian values, where the working class and worker unions have shaped cultural values and traditions. In this concern, it is interesting to outline the novel “En flyktning krysser sine spor”, written by the famous author Aksel Sandemose. The novel was published in 1933 and described the pattern of thinking that “Thou Shalt Not Think Highly of Thyself”, which is often used to describe Norwegian culture and mentality (Eriksen, 1993:17). The message the book sets out is often called the “Law of Jante” and has repeatedly been mentioned by business-men as an obstacle to economic growth in Norway that contains a negative ideology which undermines the original and unusual (Eriksen, 1993); it says that people should not act very differently from the “normal” expectations. This mentality and the lack of a strong aristocracy and social hierarchies have been important in Norwegian society (Eriksen, 1993). This is also indicated through a strong social democratic policy with a focus upon collective ideas such as class struggle, strong trade unions (Vormeland, 1993; Tjeldvoll, 1998) and teachers’ power (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003).

The Norwegian class struggle was not only driven by random bottom-up movements, but rather was part of a political strategy to agree on compromises for national and social cohesion. State control was emphasised to build up the country, with collectivistic thoughts reflected through common national values rather than distinct class values. State control and national aims contributed further to creating the Welfare state, the socio-democratic idea and the initiative to create equal opportunities (Telhaug, 2008; Tjeldvoll, 1998). State driven services financed by oil revenues (Werler & Sivesind, 2008) also guaranteed for the same social services for all, and included rights to education with social cohesion as the main aim (Telhaug, 2008). Another collectivist idea is shown in the establishment of The Value Commission [*Verdikommisjonen*]. The commission was established in 1998 to strengthen Norwegian common values (Sejersted, 2000). National educational aims were used to avoid a rigid class society and promote equality and collective values (Telhaug, 2008). In this regard, it is interesting that schooling has been considered as a social rather than academic unit within the state (Engelsen, 2003).

In contrast to Norway, England was a metropolis in the 19th century, with London as the largest city in the world and with a high degree of immigration (Ball, 2008). The urban environment reacted late to build up educational opportunities, at the same time as a new middle class from industry and management appeared (Ball, 2008). This can be illustrated through the living standard differences between the product workers and the owners of production (Hardill et al., 2001). One consequence of these differences was clear: class differences increased in a Victorian society (Tomlinson, 2005). Compared with the Norwegian context of collectivism, the English situation developed in an individualistic direction. In spite of this, some collectivist initiatives were taken within education. One significant initiative was the aim of free education for all through The Education Act 1944, but this resulted in a tripartite system that gave the middle classes greater chances than others (Heath & Jacobs, 1999). Specifically, the maintenance of the tripartite system led to the preservation of academic and social selection (Tomlinson, 2005) and created a cultural polarisation between the working and middle classes (Jones, 2008). A new hope grew up when the New Labour party won the 1997 election and launched the idea of Third Way policies, but were neither realised as new opportunities for all nor a comprehensive school system (Simon, 2001). Multiple explanations to this can be found, but one especially important issue is that the policy was not able to change the established cultural movements (Jones, 2008) that maintained the contemporary class inequalities (Heath & Jacobs, 1999).

The focus on access for all was, as in Norway, emphasised by the 19th century (Ball, 2008). The need for mass education after WW2 renewed the relevance of school access for all, but it was heavily focused upon the tripartite system with modern schools, grammar schools and technical high schools (Jones, 2008) that benefited middle class children (Ball, 2008). Taking this into consideration, the rejection of a comprehensive school system represents certain English traditions and values. It is claimed that individual choice has always been a central priority in the education system (Holmes & McLean, 1992). This is further indicated in the arguments against a state driven comprehensive education system, but also the priority given to parental choice where the wealthiest are able to buy their children a better education (Jones, 2008). Furthermore, the value of individuality is also underlined in the contemporary *curriculum* (QCDA, 2007a) and *Every Child Matters* program (ECM) (DCSF, 2004c). In addition, inequality is evident in the English contemporary education through what Gewirtz and Cribb (2009) call academic segregation.

5.3 Curriculum Traditions

As education is embedded in culture (Hahn, 2006), it is natural to believe that national identities and societies are also created through education. This brings further relevance to the study of education curricula because they reflect the societies they sprung from (Erben & Dickinson, 2004). This means that curricula represent historical and political priorities found in national cultures. In other words, the essential values, norms, traditions and heritage of the society are reflected in their curricula. In this concern, it is interesting that tensions between society and the individual have persisted in the Western societies for centuries (Ornstein, 2007). Based upon this, it is likely that approaches directed at the society or individualism will also be evident within education. In this section, it will be argued that the English individualistic curriculum traditions represent essentialism, while the Norwegian collectivistic curriculum traditions represent encyclopaedism.

Essentialism is defined as a theory about the sources of power and order in the world (Ellis, 2002) and was a predominant pattern in Western Europe in modern time period (Holmes & McLean, 1992). Furthermore, the curriculum tradition of essentialism is based upon a Platonic ideal where knowledge should be derived from the culture of the leisured class and the elite (Lewis, 1999). It is therefore interesting that English curricula have been derived from Plato (Holmes & McLean, 1992) and been linked to the issue of social class (Lewis, 1999). In contrast, it is also interesting that the curriculum tradition of encyclopaedism, also called progressivism (Orstein & Hunkins, 1998) represents a very different perspective. The encyclopaedic model survives in all European education systems, including Scandinavia, but does not appear in Britain (Holmes & McLean, 1992). Taking this into consideration, Norway and England are based upon different curriculum traditions that are reflected in pedagogic practice.

Regarding curricula, it is natural to ask what knowledge has the highest priority and value? The answer to this question illustrates some of the differences between essentialism and encyclopaedism, and also differences in English and Norwegian education. In terms of essentialism, Plato was clear in the intention of education: wisdom was to be valued higher than cleverness, which should be achieved through educating the elite in moral training (Holmes & McLean, 1992). It is already clear that due to these perspectives, the value of education is divided. A certain kind of education is valued higher than others, in this case wisdom rather than cleverness. This discussion is relevant for the English curriculum traditions and is

exemplified through the education debate in the 1920s, where three different types of knowledge were discussed; literary culture, scientific culture and technical culture (Lewis, 1999). The link to the post WW2 education structure in England is evident. The English tripartite system was established and divided, after The Education Act 1944, offering education in three separate levels; modern schools, grammar schools and technical high schools (Jones, 2008). A comparison of encyclopaedism and Norway's curriculum is also interesting. Encyclopaedism is a contrast in its focus on democratisation and equality of education (Ornstein, 2007). This is evident through the emphasis on universality, where all students should acquire as much knowledge as possible in all subjects (McLean, 1990). Furthermore, the Norwegian core curriculum has a central role; all students have the same aims and topics in each subject (McLean, 1990). The contradiction to English essentialism is illustrated through the higher value placed on some subjects rather than others (Ornstein, 2007). English education values mathematics, science, history, English and foreign languages most (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998), whilst the Norwegian education emphasises utility and links between academic education and the need for links vocational studies (McLean, 1990).

The differences between Norwegian and English education are further exemplified through their collective and individualistic approaches. The Norwegian encyclopaedic approach emphasises egalitarian values (McLean, 1990) and universal knowledge (Holmes & McLean, 1992), while English essentialism is focused on intellectual growth for the individual (Ornstein, 2007). In practice, this means that Norwegian education emphasises development of the whole child (Ornstein, 2007) in a system where students have the same subjects, same hours per week and limited specialisation (Holmes, 1990). Furthermore, the focus on group learning rather than individualism, and on co-operation and problem solving, is essential (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998). In contrast, English education is directed towards specialisation and individualism, where teaching is based on students' needs (Broadfoot, Osborn, Sharpe and Planel, 2000) and different individuals make use of different materials (Holmes & McLean, 1992). The contradiction to encyclopaedism is further evident in the English focus upon establishing group values, based upon traditions (Ornstein, 2007). This means there is a division between "folk" and "high" culture, evident in the way the value of knowledge is divided into groups of academic, technical and practical knowledge (Holmes & McLean, 1992). The Norwegian system emphasis upon educating all students and experiencing fellowship (Gundem, Karseth and Sivesind, 2003) stands as the opposite of English individualism, which creates high-status knowledge amongst a political and intellectual elite (Holmes & McLean, 1992).

Another interesting aspect of essentialism is that it was not created for mass education. The English 1944 Education Act had limited success in its aim of providing secondary education for all. It is claimed that access to education increased, but also that the maintenance of fee-paying schools and the tripartite system was still reflected in the comprehensive school curricula (Holmes & McLean, 1992). This means that inequality was created because the political and intellectual elite imposed their values through the education system. This is further confirmed by Ornstein's (2007) explanation of how essentialism aims at homogenous grouping and education that supports the preservation of the past. Subjects reproduce traditional content and values, while the opposite situation is evident through the encyclopaedic approach. The encyclopaedic approach considers the learning processes to be highly important as is evident in the focus towards the child as a learner rather than a subject, but also on children needing to learn *how* to think, not *what* to think (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998). Furthermore, encyclopaedism is based upon students' interests and should prepare students for changing and shaping the world through education (Ornstein, 2007). Based upon this and the discussion in this section, English and Norwegian educational policies and practice have historical and contemporary differences.

5.4 Curriculum History

Curricula are defined as "the consensus among stakeholders concerning what should be taught, why, how and where" (Cummings, 2003:142), and contain a set of priorities about what knowledge has the highest value (Holmes & McLean, 1992). In addition, curricula reflect culture (Feinberg, 2008), the history of societies they were created in (Erben & Dickinson, 2004) and the political or educational priorities in those societies (Engelsen, 2003). This section aims to present and discuss those cultural and political-historical curriculum priorities in Norway and England.

Norway

Norwegian education policies have historically been based upon a high degree of common political understanding about education policies (Telhaug, 2008). This is evident through education history, which developed from a church-driven to a state-controlled comprehensive school system (Baune, 2007). The orientation towards learning and individual development is evident in the 1850s changes to the education system, from the "allmueskole" to the "folkeskole" (Baune, 2007). One result of this change was the legislated right to access for all, but the question of individual need was still not raised. This is confirmed by the further

emphasis placed on access that resulted in a new resolution in 1920, *enhetsskolevedtaket* [*The comprehensive school resolution*]⁴ (Strømstad et al., 2004). The resolution emphasised access to schooling, but was further underlined the aim to create a standard school for normal students (Strømstad et al., 2004). Norway was the first country in west-Europe to implement a system of seven years of primary and secondary school, in 1936 (Baune, 2007), and this was followed up with emphasis on individual need in the curriculum of 1939 (Engelsen, 2003). The curriculum was built on an understanding of students' different needs and requirements, and, in addition, teachers' abilities to use various methods in their teaching (Engelsen, 2003). Education for all was further emphasised in the 1940s, but at this time was heavily focused upon meeting national goals rather than distinct social class values (Telhaug, 2008). This indicates a strong belief in a state-driven society and is considered as fundamental in the vision of equal schooling in the post WW2 period (Engelsen, 2003).

The 1970s were an important decade in terms of individual needs provision in Norway. First of all, the curriculum of 1974 was developed, and second, the Special School Act was abolished. The curriculum of 1974 emphasised that all students have different needs and teaching should be based upon their skills and ambitions, but also that individualisation of teaching should be evident in all subjects (Engelsen, 2003). No students should, in other words, be held back in development, but should progress according to their skills and knowledge. This provoked a dilemma when the Special School Act was abolished in 1975, meaning that special need education was to take place within regular schools (Engelsen, 2003), which had implications in terms of individualised teaching. The range of needs was to become bigger, but teaching was still dominated by a teacher-student approach based upon textbooks (Baune, 2007). Teachers expressed helplessness and individualisation was seen to have failed, for both low- and high achievers; it was questioned if the schools had started to function as preservation of children rather than learning institutions (Baune, 2007). A gap between intentions and practice was evident and teachers, as a result of this, required more resources (Baune, 2007).

It did not take more than 13 years before the principle of individualisation was replaced by adjusted teaching in the curriculum of 1984. Adjusted teaching appeared as a basic principle in the curriculum, and it described how teaching should be adjusted according to quantity, levels and methods (Engelsen, 2003). Students with special needs were also to be provided with an individual education plan (Engelsen, 2003). The curriculum of 1984 replaced after 13 years by

⁴ My translation.

the curriculum of 1997. The future of the comprehensive school system was now heavily questioned (Telhaug, 1994), but policies were still directed towards one school for all. Adjusted teaching and individual differences were still in focus, but the issues as collectivity and likeness appeared from the past (Engelsen, 2003). The belief in adjusted teaching as a tool to provide for individual need was further legislated for in *Opplæringslova* in 1999 (Baune, 2007). The students' rights to adjusted teaching were established as a main pillar in the Norwegian education system. A following challenge came when the quality of Norwegian schooling was questioned in the 1990s (Tjeldvoll, 1998) and again by poor PISA and TIMMS results in the next decade (Gundem, 2008). A paradox appears in terms of adjusted teaching: the principle intends to improve provision for individual needs, but led to compliance towards students that resulted in further low achievement (Haug, 2004). The need for a new educational direction emerged and the new curriculum, *Kunnskapsløftet* was presented in 2006 (Gundem, 2008). The new curriculum maintained a focus on equality and adjusted teaching, but was also more focused upon results and goals rather than the process of teaching (Dale et al., 2005). In spite of this, it was a new way of thinking compared to the former national heritage, and was a further reaction to the situation of compliance (Dale et al., 2005).

England

Education in England was provided through dame schools, church societies and voluntary organisations in the 1850s (Ball, 2008). Educational attainment was considered a family issue in this period, but a free, state provided system gradually developed through the 19th century (Ball, 2008). The state system did not have support from some groups in the society, and as a result in attempts to reduce state influence and maintain fee-paying schools (Ball, 2008).

Both the 1870 Act and 1902 Act were steps towards including lower class children and reducing the laissez-faire tendencies that dominated education (Ball, 2008). The political focus was, in other words, focused on access and equal opportunities for all.

The post WW2 period was an important time for English education. The period was dominated by national rebuilding and issues such as mass education, shared social rights and the building of a Welfare state; the 1944 Education Act contributed to this rebuilding (Jones, 2008). This Act was important because the education policy it set out was directed towards secondary education for all (Jones, 2008), but it was also heavily criticised for being a social class project for the working class (Ball, 2008). One of the main English education pillars was the principle of individual choice (Holmes & McLean, 1992), but the middle class risked losing the benefits

the maintained school system gave them through the 1944 Education Act. It was further argued that separation of students was beneficial and that the tripartite system with modern schools, grammar schools and technical high schools was just (Jones, 2008). In spite of broad support for comprehensive education (Walford, 2001), the tripartite system, where students were separated according to age, ability and aptitude, was still maintained (Tomlinson, 2005).

Comprehensive schools were nevertheless established around the country, but grammar schools maintained their position as middle class schools that produced high grades (Ball, 2008). The implementation and establishment of comprehensive schools did not work as intended and the gap between working and middle class students was preserved. This view is further supported in the critique of the Labour government's half-hearted comprehensive reforms in the 1960s (Ball, 2008). Results of this included more class competition in the education system and further social polarisation.

The period from the 1970s to the present time can be considered as two distinctive political periods, one influenced by the Conservative party and the second influenced by the Labour party. The need for mass education was an important factor in the 1960s (Jones, 2008) and debates about creation of a common curriculum grew up (Holmes & McLean, 1992). The central aim of providing the same knowledge for all should be to benefit the working class as well as the middle class (Holmes & McLean, 1992). In contrast, one result of the changes in the 1960s was the rise of capitalism and expansion of the middle class (Jones, 2008), which further maintained educational advantages for the middle class (Ball, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005). The 1988 Act was considered to be the most important since 1944, but the results in terms of equality were minor (Trowler, 2003). Government control at this point was high and resulted in a centralised curriculum, based upon distinctions between academic, practical and technical learning, prepared for a class-divided society (Tomlinson, 2005) as well as parental choice (Trowler, 2003). One intention of the 1944 Act was to provide school access for all and another was the creation of equality, but still education legitimised and justified inequality (Tomlinson, 2005). The principle of parental choice led to middle class benefits in an education system of school diversity and fee-paying schools (Ball, 2008). One example of this is that the 1993 curriculum reflected Victorian values and traditional teaching, while the private schools continued to devise their own curricula (Tomlinson, 2005). The middle classes did therefore get access to the best schools, but direct influence on schooling through academic segregation was also evident (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2009). The middle class priorities were further evident in the political conservatism that shaped the English developments and was supported by two

distinctions; first of all, globalisation rather than national identity, second, market-driven economy rather than social cohesion (Jones, 2008). Critiques of the Welfare state and emphasis on market freedom, parental choice and privatisation dominated the period and led to a society of individualism and polarisation (Ball, 2008).

In 1997, the Labour Party was elected after 18 years of conservative governments, and the vision of beneficial education for all, to compete within the global economy was launched. This was evident in the white paper of 1997, *Excellence in schools* (Ball, 2008), which aimed to modernise the comprehensive principle and support equal opportunities for all (Walford, 2001). The focus upon access for all was further underlined by Chitty (2001), who argued that schooling should be about benefits from learning rather than educational opportunities. The class polarisation was not considered to be beneficial and the comprehensive school approach was seen as a solution. The Labour party presented this as a Third Way education policy (Whitty, 2002). The Labour party introduced a flexible curriculum with the aim to unify qualification structures, and represent a national curriculum structured according to abilities (Tomlinson, 2005). This was also evident when schools were given more flexibility to develop courses for the individual student in 1998 (Tomlinson, 2005), but the unwillingness to abolish the grammar schools (Ball, 2008) led to maintenance of academic and social selection (Chitty, 2001). One explanation of this was that The Third Way approach was not fully implemented because of a lack of political commitment to the comprehensive school system (Whitty, 2001), and it also underlined that New Labour policy was quite close to those linked to Thatcherism (Giddens, 2000). It was argued that many years of a market approach had established cultural movements that influenced this failure of comprehensive policy (Jones, 2008). In spite of this, the Labour government did offer some difference in terms of individual need provision in the 2001 white paper, *Schools: Achieving success* (DfES, 2001). This document contributed to a change from a focus on educational standards to a focus on structures, and led to emphasise on differentiation and personalisation in teaching (Ball, 2008). Furthermore, personalisation in assessments was further emphasised in the changes to the *secondary curriculum* from 2007 (QCDA, 2008). In spite of this, it is claimed that the comprehensive school “experiment” (Gray, 2001:131) and the “one size fits all” doctrine failed (Evans, 2005:3) and inequality of status and opportunities continued to appear (Pring, 2006).

5.5 Education Policy

Policies are formal and national visions, aims and goals represented by written texts, but also processes and outcomes of discourses (Ball, 2006). Policies are also “viewed as statements which can be understood and interpreted in different ways depending upon the audience and the context” (Trowler, 2003:201). The social and cultural aspects are further underlined when Alexander (2008) claims that all education is grounded in social and political values. A natural consequence is that a written text contains interpretations and understandings of the content, which further lead to different practices springing from the same political visions and aims.

The political texts of particular interest to this study are the Norwegian *core curriculum* (KUF, 1997 and *Opplæringslova* (Lovdata, 2008), while the *national curriculum, key stage 3-4* (QCDA, 2007c) and *ECM* (DCSF, 2004b) represent the key English documents. The discussion about curricula is vital because of the descriptions they provide of what, why, how and when to teach (Cummings, 2003), while *Opplæringslova* (Lovdata, 2008) and *ECM* (QCDA, 2007e) are significant in terms of their description of individual need provision.

Norway

Core curriculum

The Norwegian *core curriculum* can be read as an introduction and background that links general and specific curriculum aims together (Telhaug, 2006). This link is not unproblematic and core curricula are criticised for disproportionate emphasis on socialisation (Barrow, 2008). These social aspects are also evident in the Norwegian *core curriculum* (KUF, 1997) in the descriptions of the seven types of people [*mennesketyper*]. Further emphasis is put on common culture and common content with focus on adjusted teaching (Engelsen, 2003). The introduction (KUF, 1997:5) also underlines how teaching should be adapted to individual needs. Furthermore, it emphasises that all students should have equal opportunities to participate in schooling and that education should “nurture the individual’s uniqueness” (KUF, 1997:40).

A following issue is how the Norwegian *core curriculum* clearly emphasises the idea of equality (Engelsen, 2003) and brings interest to how the concept of equality is understood. A distinct definition is not evident, but different aspects as “equal ability to participate” and that “greater equality of results can be achieved” both of which are described in the introduction of *core curriculum* (KUF, 1997:5). It is natural to believe that the first quote is directed towards access for all, while the latter one describes what Engelsen (2003) explains aims to compensate for

differences in student skills. This is further demonstrated when equality is interpreted as the same access for all, while the problems of individualised teaching are unsolved (Werler & Sivesind, 2008). In other words, the aim of equality works as an obstacle to appreciating differences, where equal results are emphasised rather than the encouragement of academic differences. Furthermore, the concept of equality has remained unchanged, although the policy of integrating ideological, cultural and national values has reduced the emphasis on academic aims (Werler & Sivesind, 2008). This is confirmed by the curriculum visions of cultural acceptance, heritage and collaboration, being emphasised while individual, academically focused education receives few explanations and descriptions (KUF, 1997).

The *core curriculum* aims to “expand the individual's capacity to perceive and to participate, to experience, to empathize and to excel” (KUF, 1997:5). In addition, teachers should release the individual learner and stimulate individuals’ cognitive potential (Klette et al., 2000). This acknowledges individual rights to development, but personal development is seen as taking place in spite of this, not underlined as a specific issue in itself, before the higher secondary school level (KUF, 1997:2). Furthermore, it is claimed in *Prinsipper for opplæringen* [*The quality framework*] (Udir, 2006) that all students should meet challenges for development, but this is again put in a context that should strengthen co-operation and collectivism, with adjusted teaching as the main pillar. The individual focus in terms of personal academic development does seem to disappear behind the aim of collectivism. This aspect is further evident in how social, rather than academic development is described throughout the *core curriculum* (KUF, 1997). Finally, it is interesting to observe that descriptions of adjusted teaching are presented as ways to stimulate students’ interests and abilities, while explanations of concepts such as “personalised learning” or “individual learning” are nonexistent.

Opplæringslova

Opplæringslova (Lovdata, 2008) is also relevant in terms of individual need provision. The legislation was established in 1999 and emphasised all students’ rights to adjusted teaching according to their needs (Engelsen, 2003). *Opplæringslova* §1-3 (Lovdata, 2008) underlines individual rights and further amplifies the significance of adjusted teaching that is already emphasised in the *core curriculum* (KUF, 1997). The Act is especially relevant in two aspects; first §1-3, “*Opplæringa skal tilpassast evnene og føresetnadene hjå den enkelte eleven, lærlingen og lære kandidat*” [*Education shall be adjusted according to capabilities and requirements of the individual pupil, apprentice and candidate*]; and second, §5-1, “*Elevar som ikkje har eller som ikkje kan få tilfredsstillande utbytte av det ordinære opplæringstilbodet, har*

rett til spesialundervisning” [Pupils, who do not or cannot receive satisfactory benefits from regular education have rights to special need education]⁵. These sections describe how teaching should be adjusted according to the students, and further how students who do not benefit from regular teaching have rights to special needs education. This puts special requirements on the schools and teachers in terms of individual need provision. Different approaches can be taken to provide this in a satisfactory way, but additional resources (Barrow, 2008) or ability organising (Lowe, 2005) are reasonable approaches. In spite of this, it is likely to believe that these approaches are rare. The financial situation in schools is very varied (Engelsen, 2003), and *Opplæringslova* §8-2 (Lovdata, 2008) limits opportunities for ability organising. Neither resources nor organising appear to be realistic alternatives to individual need provision and this brings more relevance to the principle of adjusted teaching. The idea of adjusted teaching is that individual students should achieve best possible outcome (Dale et al., 2005), but the idea can also be questioned when it decreases teachers’ academic supervision of their students, which again leads to low outcomes (Haug, 2004).

England

National Curriculum, Key Stage 3-4

The Education Act of 1870 aimed to include lower class children in education (Ball, 2008), but the government did not specify any detailed curriculum at that time (Cummings, 2003). The English secondary schools have historically been diverse in structure (Cummings, 2003), but in spite of this, the contemporary curriculum underlines some common national priorities. The curriculum is divided in two main parts and the *secondary curriculum, key stage 3 and 4*, is most relevant for this study (QCDA, 2007c).

The *secondary curriculum, key stage 3-4* is illustrative of important educational priorities, and has a very different approach to individual rights and individual need provision than that found in Norway. First of all, it is interesting to observe how the issue of personalised learning is emphasised from the beginning of the English *national curriculum*. Titles such as “personal development”, “organising your curriculum” and “developing your curriculum” illustrate these political priorities (QCDA, 2007d). The *national curriculum* put a strong focus on equality as an opportunity to learn and be challenged, and further stimulate the highest progress and attainment that is possible for all (DfES, 2004). Descriptions of the latest changes in the curriculum are followed up with descriptions of the significance of personalised learning to

⁵ My translations

meet all needs and engage all learners (QCA, 2008). This is very clear in explaining how “all learners, whatever their ability, make the best progress possible and achieve the highest possible standards in subjects and qualifications” (QCDA, 2007a). The possibility to develop and design personalised curricula is, therefore, very different to the Norwegian focus on adjusted teaching, rather than personalised learning. The curriculum gives the school, teachers and students the possibilities to focus upon individual students’ needs rather than the principle of adjusted teaching. This creates an individualised focus on students’ rights to a quality education and provision for individual needs rather than access alone.

Every Child Matters

The English education policy emphasises the individual rights to a quality education, but in addition, *ECM* was redeveloped in 2004 (DCSF, 2004b) and followed up with the *Children Act 2004* (OPSI, 2004). The initiative was taken to make educational opportunities more available for vulnerable groups (Tomlinson, 2005), making the aim of social inclusion of children from lower socio-economic areas a significant issue (Ball, 2008). Furthermore, legislation that set out for childrens’ rights to receive the help and support they need to achieve their potential was evident in the *Children Act 2004* (OPSI, 2004), which also strengthened the focus of *ECM* (DCSF, 2004d). Students’ individual rights were again emphasised, but this time through relational thinking (Whitty, 2002). This means that the responsibility for student development was not located in the schools alone, but also in the local child and youth services (Tomlinson, 2005). A wide-ranging system of several actors is thus accountable in catching those falling behind and represents a social “safety net”. This belief in social wellbeing and safety as an increasing factor in education results positioned the educational sector as one of several actors that must secure social welfare and further learning (Ball, 2008). In other words, education and social well-being were seen as related to each other. One consequence of this is evident as *ECM* enables schools to design a curriculum according to students’ needs, capabilities and aspirations (QCDA, 2007d). Helping children to achieve their ambitions and aims in life through academic success is, in other words, considered as a way out of poverty and into future employment (Tomlinson, 2005).

5.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed English and Norwegian cultures. The discussion revealed national differences and similarities that are helpful in understanding the different educational contexts. In addition, the cultural aspects of Norway and England are important contributions to

understand the data derived from the interviews. In this regard, it is natural to conceptualise Norwegian culture in terms of collectivism and English culture in terms of individualism. This is exemplified with the Norwegian focus upon the Welfare state, egalitarianism and likeness, whilst individual choice, class diversity and late reactions towards equality illustrate the English. Furthermore, cultures are reflected in the English market approach and Norwegian state education approach. The different cultures are also reflected through curriculum traditions. The English tradition of essentialism represents issues such as intellectual growth, grouping and specialisation, while universal knowledge, developing the whole person and fellowship is underlined in the Norwegian encyclopaedic tradition.

This chapter has aimed to contribute to the empirical data in this study. Cultural aspects in English and Norwegian education have been discussed. The next chapter (6) presents empirical data derived from the semi-structured interview from this study.

6 Results

Teachers' interpretations of, and experiences of equality and provision for individual needs in England and Norway can be considered in terms of six comparable categories. This chapter presents the categories of: *equality* (6.1); *socio-economic background* (6.2); *assessment of need* (6.3); *students' responsibility* (6.4); *school circumstances* (6.5); *teaching resources* (6.6).

6.1 Equality

This category refers to the English and Norwegian participants' perspectives and experiences of equality. The investigation focused on how and if students were provided with equal opportunities to succeed in school. The concept of equality has many perspectives, but the participants were clear in their interpretation of it. Equality is specified in the interview schedule (question 11, 14, 20, 21), but views on this issue were also derived from the participants, through answers to other questions (question 10, 19, 22).

6.1.1 Findings

The English participants defined equality as provision of opportunities at different levels. An English participant explained as follows:

Equality doesn't mean treating people the same. It means being aware of differences and meeting the different needs, so that everybody has the opportunity to achieve whatever level they can achieve at. So it's certainly not about being same with everybody. Most definitely not (3:6).

This issue of opportunity was emphasised several times in the English data. One example is the teachers who claimed that "everybody has the same opportunities" (2:5) and that "the opportunity is there, but students are not the same, you know they are all different in so many ways" (5:10).

The Norwegian participants interpreted the concept of equality in a similar way, but the issue of handling students differently dominated their answers. It was argued that all humans are different and because of that, have different needs. One teacher explained how equality is related to different needs, saying that "handling students differently creates equality. To handle them individually creates the best possible equality" (14:4). Another Norwegian teacher was similar to the English answers above in the emphasis placed on equal opportunities. She explained that "it doesn't mean that everyone is the same (...), but that everyone get the same

opportunities, rights and responsibility. (...) It's not equality to be handled the same way" (12:6). The relationship between equality and individual needs were further underlined by another Norwegian participant who explained:

Equality is not about using the same amount of time for every student and to do the same tasks, but that it has to be adjusted to an individual level. Everyone needs challenges in the class. They need tasks that are adjusted to their level (16:5).

The issue of individual needs was further described in relation to humanity in general, when a Norwegian teacher stated that "you can't aim for shaping everyone to be similar. Humans are not like that" [*man kan ikke ha som mål at man skal forme dem til å bli like. Sånn er ikke menneskene*] (11:5). He was supported by a Norwegian colleague who claimed, "I don't believe that students are the same. That is so against my belief. They are individuals" (13:4). The same teacher described later her ideal class and emphasised that she wanted to teach "a class grouped by ability. I believe it would provide a lot more opportunities if you had a separate class for those who need bigger challenges" (13:5). She went on to explain in frustration, "I think it's just as bad that high achievers don't get challenges as a low achiever don't get help. Here [in Norway] is everyone is so extremely afraid of labelling the students" (13:5).

Another aspect of equality was also evident. The understanding of equality as students' right to a *quality* education was significantly higher profile in England than Norway. One English teacher explained how equality is related to students' rights to teaching quality, and that everyone should receive quality education according to their ability. He described that it "shouldn't matter what room they [students] happen to sit in, they should be given their individual chances to succeed" (8:5). Two English teachers explained equality as the "rights of children of different abilities to receive good education, just as important for the lower ability children as the high ability children" (1:7) and that "every student deserves a quality of education" (5:10). The latter teacher also expressed how he wanted the students to grasp the opportunities they were offered. He explained how they should "have an attitude to go in and go for it" (5:3).

All teachers in England and Norway interpreted equality as involving different needs for different students. In spite of a high degree of common understanding, some differences appeared in the practical experiences of the concept. The English experience of equality was strongly related to social class, while this pattern was absent in the Norwegian data. An English teacher in the first school described the practice of equality as follows:

I think that [education] is not as equal as it should be. Sometimes, I think children still, even if we are not supposed to do this, are labelled from quite an early age (...). But I still don't think there are really equal opportunities for every child regardless of their ability or sort of their previous experience. You know, (...) you belong to this class and you belong in this one and therefore you can't experience these activities and that kind of thing (2:3).

This teacher clearly states the lack of equality within education and underlines how assumptions and family background appear and create limitations in how far opportunities for all can be provided. This was supported by a teacher in the second school who considered lack of equality as a general social problem where “inequality still exists because we don't have the facilities to pick up everyone and assist them with whatever those needs are” (7:6).

The Norwegian teachers did also explain how equality affected their practice. One teacher explained how she taught her students to understand that “it's fair sometimes to be unfair” [*det er rettferdig av og til å være urettferdig*] (10:6) and how her students understood that as a basic foundation to her teaching approach. Furthermore, a teacher from another Norwegian school underlined the schools responsibility for individual needs: “the school should create equal opportunities so they can develop their potential” (16:6). The lack of this opportunity in practice was further criticised by a colleague, who stated that “I don't think the education system is created to provide equal opportunities. I don't think so” (17:5). This perspective was also evident in another Norwegian teacher's comments:

(...) everyone should have the same opportunities. The same opportunities to education. Do I think it happens? Not at all! It's a lot about socio-economic background. The school gives a foundation, but students with parents who follow up and have resources have more opportunities than those from homes with difficulties and parents who don't follow up (13:4).

6.2 Socio-Economic Background

The issue of socio-economic background was brought up on the participants' initiative and the link to equality and individual needs provision led to it's emergence as an important category. This category refers to teachers' experiences of socio-economic background as playing an important role in their ability to meet students' individual needs and develop them to a higher ability level. The category was mainly derived from questions about individual need, potential and equality (question 10, 11, 12, 14, 20, 22), but also in questions about purpose of schooling, national, student and class characteristics (question 4, 5, 8, 9).

6.2.1 Findings

“Everyone in Norwegian schools should, at least politically formulated, have equal opportunities. When it comes to practice, if you have students with a turbulent background, they don’t have the same opportunities as others” (15:7). This was claimed by one of the Norwegian participants, while another Norwegian teacher explained how “the children have such different premises [*forutsetninger*], so extremely different premises [*forutsetninger*]” (18:8). That statement was supported by a colleague from the other Norwegian school who explained how “all students have unequal opportunities because they have different starting points. They have different backgrounds [*baggasje*], and to talk about equal opportunities is in a way a misconception” (16:6).

English experiences of socio-economic background were similar to the Norwegian views. The English participants emphasised that all students should have the same opportunities, but were also clear about how inequality appeared because of socio-economic differences. One English teacher explained how individual need provision contained several aspects such as intellect, emotions and pushing the students. She further explained how students’ socio-economic background determined these aspects, affected their time at school, and argued that teachers have to “look at what’s going on home and what’s going on at school” (6:3) to provide for individual needs. This perspective was also supported by an English colleague: “students have different opportunities and different support mechanisms” that can be considered as a ‘class issue’” (7:4). A teacher from the other English school further confirmed this view:

You are absolutely controlled by your environment (...), so it is down to how wealthy your parents are basically. So, I have been to schools where, you know the parents are lawyers, doctors and the expectation is different, so the approach to the student is different. Their background, middle class, working class. That’s where you see differences in school, intake of kids. Ultimately schools are dictated by the kids they have in. (4:2-3)

The unfairness of the system appeared as a concern in participants’ arguments about how socio-economic background determined or limited students’ education possibilities, and how talents were wasted because of unsatisfactory home environments or financial positions. One English teacher focused particularly on their limited possibilities:

I don’t think there should be just the rich or, you know the elite to go to that because we have students here from very poor backgrounds that are incredibly bright, but they don’t have the opportunities as the students that come from more privileged families (6:6).

This example was one of several that showed a reaction against the elitist form of English society, where students’ opportunities were controlled by socio-economic background. One of

the English teachers reflected about his childhood experience at a grammar school. He explained, “when you got into the school you got better opportunities and that’s not fair. Because the kids don’t choose where they are born or who their parents are. They should get the same chances” (8:3).

That everyone should get the same chances was emphasised by the Norwegian teachers as well as those in England. In spite of this, they described the reality as different. One Norwegian participant explained how “everyone does not have the same opportunities. It has to do with inheritance and environment” [*alle har ikke like muligheter. Det har å gjøre med arv og miljø*] (10:4). She further explained that teachers had to make adjustments because of socio-economic background and family issues, and illustrated students’ development as being like walking up a set of stairs, and that they could go one step back because of negative family conditions.

Two other Norwegian teachers explained the importance of taking socio-economic background into consideration when providing for individual needs and development. The first claimed that “everyone doesn’t have the same starting point for learning, and then you have to adapt the teaching” (11:3), while the second stated that:

[Social background and individual development] are so closely linked together. A student’s social background is so important in terms of how that student develops. There is no doubt about that. The interest from a home environment and the encouragement from childhood on. So it is a huge difference (15:4).

The significance and influence of different socio-economic background was discussed further in terms of the parental role, in both England and Norway. One Norwegian teacher from a high-income area described his experience of parents’ involvement and how it affected the students’ needs and pedagogical practice. He talked about the gap between parents’ needs and the students’ capacity at school when he asked the question, “who’s needs should be covered? I don’t know if it’s the students’ or parents’ needs. It’s difficult to see because the parents have distinct aims for their children” (11:6). While this teacher expressed problems in determining the students’ needs, another Norwegian colleague emphasised how individual needs had to be understood in collaboration between school and parents. He claimed that parents have to push their children to work at school, “those who practice most get the best results. It doesn’t depend on the talent, but the ability to work” [*Den som øver mest blir best. Det er ikke talentet det kommer an på, men evnen til å arbeide*] (18:3). The parents’ role in securing individual needs and development was also emphasised by another Norwegian teacher: “I think that how you are supported at home might be the most important condition. Students who are struggling at

school, don't necessary have to end up being losers [*skoletapere*], if you have a lot of support from the parents" (19:4).

The significance of parents' role was also specially underlined in the English data. First of all, one English teacher specifically stated that individual need provision cannot be seen as "a purely school education thing" (6:3). Another English colleague confirmed that other factors are significant for students' development, for example that families from a disadvantaged background pass on lower aspirations to their children, which again affects their education results. She therefore claimed that teachers have to help to "raise parents' aspirations" (3:3). A teacher from the other English school supports this view when she explained the significance of parents' expectations, explaining that "expectations [between families] are different and that is quite obvious" (7:3), while another English teacher stated that low achievers "probably come from less supportive backgrounds in terms of their parents" (4:6).

6.3 Assessment of Need

This category is relevant in terms of the idea of individual need provision for all. The category reflects the practical levels about why individual need provision is necessary in teaching and how it is to be provided. The issue of teacher-student familiarity represent a key point and is dealt with under a subheading in this section. The category derived mainly from the questions about individual need and potential (question 10, 11, 12), but was also evident in other questions (question 4, 8, 9, 16, 17, 19, 22).

6.3.1 Findings

In contrast to the English teachers, the Norwegian experience of assessments was primarily linked to special need students and low achievers. One Norwegian teacher explained the importance of discovering individual needs through assessments. He claimed that assessing students is "what you do a lot in special need teaching. Assess the needs of lower achievers. It is obvious that every individual one of them has individual needs" (18:5). He further mentioned the individual education plan [*individuell opplæringsplan*] as a tool in making provision for individual needs. The individual education plan was brought up by several Norwegian participants and is typically attached to "those who need a lot of help" (19:5). Another Norwegian teacher explained how the use of tests was associated with special needs. She explained that "we have some tests we are using. Tests like this are basically a good tool, but

this tool in itself needs a pedagogue on the side, to observe what the students achieve in the daily teaching (10:5).

Testing was also emphasised by the English teachers, but was not only linked to special needs students and low achievers. One teacher described how the English education system emphasises assessments and testing, claiming that “we have much more emphasis on assessment and testing than some other countries, and I do believe that’s rather detrimental” (1:3). The teachers focused on formal tests as CAP, SATs and other national or local tests. The English assessments were also explained as a pragmatic part of teaching and a tool for categorisation of every student. One English teacher explained how “there is a purpose to levels and assessments, but we have to be careful so we don’t make everything so skill driven” (7:2). The significance of assessment is also underlined by a teacher from the first school, who put this directly in the context of individual need provision when he explained that “basically each child needs to be assessed in terms of all those areas, in order to determine exactly what their individual needs are” (2:4). Teachers also explained that the assessment process has more aims than simply categorising by ability. One teacher suggested that different themes have different criteria so students can evaluate their own skills and development. He explained how “they have their own assessment book, they assess themselves (...). Then what I would do is to give them my assessment grade and they would compare their own with mine” (5:8).

The contrast between English and Norwegian assessment approaches was clear; the English participants underline assessment for all, while the Norwegian participants emphasise assessments for special need students and low achievers. In contrast, teachers in one Norwegian school specifically described how they categorised students in the beginning of a new school year. It should be mentioned that this school was undergoing renovation and so only small classrooms were available. The categorisation was based upon individual grades in different subjects, but no systematic assessments were mentioned. Two teachers at the same school described how they spent some weeks creating groups based on ability levels. One of them explained how they “used the first weeks to get to know the classes, students and so on. So now we have started to think about ability groups so the students can get adjustments to their own level” (15:6). Furthermore, he argues, “the reason for this new grouping is because we know we are unable to reach their level when they sit together [mixed groups]” (15:6).

A participant from the same school teaches across several age groups and confirms how teachers group students according to ability. He describes how “groups are categorised as low ability

students and high ability students” (18:2). His colleague brings up the same issue of ability groups when she talked about a time effective way of providing individual needs. Furthermore, she describes how her class had a wide ability spectrum and justifies the categorisation as follows:

We group classes in ability levels. We have to do it like that because I see students who are in a forth grade level and in addition, I do see some students who are really good and need extra challenges (16:2).

The categorisation process in one Norwegian school was explained as temporary and necessary because of small classrooms. The Norwegian experiences were in that regard quite diverse, while *all* English participants focused on and had experience of teaching ability-based sets or classes. When compared to the Norwegian data an additional aspect appeared from the English interviews; the principle of personalised learning. This was linked to views of assessments as a two-way communication and a way to push students towards higher achievements. One English teacher exemplified the view that teachers should have conversations about personalised learning, to get to know their students better. The personalised learning was explained as an issue for students who “need to be able to say to a teacher: ‘hey look, you are expecting me to get a B but I think I can get an A. What can you give me to help me to get an A?’” (8:5). He further explained how communication between students and teachers gave more insight and knowledge about the students’ motivation, aspirations and needs.

Teacher-Student Familiarity

All participants considered teacher-student familiarity as a necessary tool for student development. This is evident in the acknowledgements made that all students have different potentials and that there is a need for teacher-student familiarity to release this potential. Two English teachers explained that teacher-student familiarity is important because “not all students learn effectively in the same manner” (4:4) and that teachers have to help by offering “whatever each child actually needs to be able to fulfil their potential” (2:3). Teacher-student familiarity was further linked to more specific individual needs as language, disabilities, behaviour issues and learning difficulties. It was also clear that it was “teachers’ responsibility to look at all those needs and address them” (3:4).

The English participants focused on releasing students’ potential, while the Norwegian participants had a different approach to teacher-student familiarity. This was evident in the Norwegians emphasise on teachers’ ability to *see* their students. To be able to see students is an expression used to underline social aspects of teaching, such as giving students extra attention

and the academic function of registering their needs. One Norwegian teacher explained how he ‘met’ low achievers by giving them some extra attention. He claimed, “I meet them with a look. I want to see them and make them feel seen (...). I think it means a lot for them that I have seen them at school” (11:9).

The issue of seeing the students was furthermore emphasised by a Norwegian teacher from the other school who considered the value of trying to “see every human” [*se hvert enkelt menneske*] (15:3) as one that is particularly important for all teachers. He explained how paperwork inhibited his ability to see, and be with, his students. The skill of seeing the students was also directly connected to provision for individual needs when another teacher stated the value of, not only seeing the students, but also using this “to register their needs and work on them” (13:2). A Norwegian teacher, who explained that the development of potential “is dependent on the ability to see the students” (12:4) and further expressed that “I think it is very difficult”. The difficulties in managing to see every student were also emphasised by a Norwegian teacher who despairingly said, “I wish that all teachers had the energy to see all students. But that is impossible” (10:7).

Problematic issues such as those were also evident in the English data. One English teacher explained how she felt the number of students was overwhelming and frustrating. She claimed that the lack of personal knowledge about students was linked to the high number of students. She explained that:

I know about students that I probably have not spoken to through three years. Now, I have spoken to them in some point talking about targets or issues or in a group or they know who I am, but I don’t feel I know them (7:4).

A teacher from the other English school supported this view. He was determined about the importance of teacher-student familiarity, but acknowledged the difficulties of achieving it. This had relevance for him particularly because he taught several age groups and ability sets. He explained, “you have to learn as much as possible about every individual you teach to know their individual needs” (5:6). Another English teacher said the challenge was to take on the role as motivators for student development. The third English teacher underlined how they could push the students more, when it was based on teacher-student familiarity:

You have to look at each individual child and see, and get to know them, you know, whoever you teach you should know the individual as well as the class and understand what is it that motivates them. And once you found that out, you can push them to achieve that a little bit more than they expect and think they are going to (3:3).

One difference appeared between Norwegian and English uses of teacher-student familiarity. Norwegian teachers made use of teacher-student familiarity in adjusted teaching. The Norwegian participants explained that increased teacher-student familiarity results in improved possibilities for adjusted teaching, while the principle of adjusted teaching was absent in the English data. The Norwegian teachers emphasised that adjusted teaching was to “see changes and opportunities in the students’ development” (10:3) and have an “overview of all different needs” (14:2). This link between teacher-student familiarity and adjusted teaching was underlined by a Norwegian teacher who explained how “everyone has to get challenges in class. Adjusted tasks to their level” (16:1). This teacher also explained the dilemma about teacher-student familiarity and adjusted teaching, in how a “wide spectrum of needs” (16:1) led to difficulties in teacher-student familiarity and adjusted teaching. Two other Norwegian colleagues supported this view. The first explained how “it is difficult to find the individual needs” (11:6) in a class based on diversity, while the second colleague explained the impossibility of adjusted teaching. He expressed concerns about the lack of resources and claimed that “we need big resources attached to those students we know have bigger needs” (15:5).

6.4 Students’ Responsibility

The English teachers’ responsibilities to meet individual needs by offering appropriate opportunities have been described in earlier sections (6.1.1). A related issue is students’ willingness and responsibility to grasp those opportunities when they are offered. The change of focus from teachers’ to students’ responsibility in the learning process makes it important to present this as a category. This category is a result of questions related to categorisation of students, individual potential and need (question 10, 11, 12, 16, 17), but it was also evident in questions about class characteristics and low achievers (question 4, 5, 14, 18, 19).

6.4.1 Findings

All of the English teachers were aware of their responsibility to provide for students with a wide spectrum of opportunities, but some did show frustration with those students who, due to different reasons, did not grasp what was offered. One English teacher expressed frustration that “within this school I think all students have the same opportunities, I just don’t think some choose to take them” (6:3). This statement was supported by another colleague who also explained how “some students will grasp their opportunities more than others” (8:3).

Furthermore, the issue was emphasised by a third English teacher who described how the school

provided the opportunities but that students should make use of them. He explained to his students that “this is what we are giving you. This is our offer. And it’s good and it’s going to be beneficial to you in so many ways (...). Come and get it. It’s for you, it’s free. Come and get it (5:10).

Unlike the English participants, the Norwegian participants did not emphasise students’ responsibilities to learn. The only focus on this was shown by one Norwegian teacher who briefly described how “the student gets a map, a compass and a destination” [*eleven får et kart og en destinasjon*] (12:5), but no further emphasis was placed on the students’ responsibility to follow the map and find the right track. The same teacher explained how he taught his students to start work if the teachers came late to class, but other responsibilities were not mentioned.

The lack of direction was also evident in the English data, but was attached to low achievers. The English participants were frustrated about the low achievers’ lack of responsibility and failure to grasp the opportunities they were given. An English teacher who categorised his students into three ability groups offered one direct explanation for low achievement. He claimed that “some students, who would be a lower 15 percent purely because they don’t want to learn. They don’t want to take the opportunities” (8:7). Another English teacher described the importance, but also the problem of students’ capacity for independence and taking responsibility for their learning. She describes how “I have tried to make my bottom set independent, but it doesn’t go very well. I am trying (...). They just don’t want to think about answers. They can’t just bother to think” (6:5).

Another perspective is evident in terms of the English students’ responsibility for grasping their opportunities. It was argued that they should be given more flexibility in terms of teaching speed. An English teacher from a school offering high-achievers the chance to take GCSE exams a year earlier than the national standard, claimed that meeting individual needs involved flexibility where “the kids have a chance early to decide what they want to do, when they want to do it and when they want to set their exams” (8:4).

The lack of student responsibility in Norway can be interpreted in several ways, but some general issues appear. First of all, it is reasonable to question if students have any realistic chance to choose and grasp a wide spectrum of individual opportunities. Even without an answer to this question, it is natural that student responsibility would be evident in the data if it were experienced, as either a positive or negative factor, during teaching. In contrast, the

Norwegian teachers did not express any issues related to it, this indicates that student responsibility is absent as a factor in the Norwegian schools. Another relevant question is to what degree there are appropriate academic challenges and requirements for Norwegian students. It is likely that high academic challenges and requirements provoke a consciousness and responsibility in students' learning processes. In the same way, it is likely that the absence of challenges and requirements decreases the demand for student responsibility. The lack of student responsibility indicates by this that Norwegian students take low degree of responsibility for their own learning progress.

6.5 School Circumstances

This category has a relevance to the issue of assessment of need (6.3), but some differences in views found in interviews make it more useful to present them separately. The assessment of need category is directed towards teachers' perceptions of how and why assessment of need is necessary, while this category focuses on wards school organising and the teacher role. The category derived from questions about individual potential and needs (question 11, 12, 14) and especially from the questions of categorisation and equality (question 16, 17, 20, 22, 23). This section contains three subcategories; organising of teaching; special need organising; and, teaching methods.

6.5.1 Findings

Organising of Teaching

Unlike the English participants, the Norwegian participants expressed dissatisfaction in the organisation of their teaching. First of all, the comprehensive school system was criticised because of the limited possibilities it offered to meet individual needs. The Norwegian teachers tended to be frustrated in how the system made provision for individual needs difficult. Furthermore, students were handled as having the same needs, rather than organised in terms of differentiation. One Norwegian teacher reflected on the lack of meeting individual needs when he despairingly explained that:

It is something about the comprehensive idea. Everyone is going through the same. Everyone is going to the same aim (...). The ideal should have been that we all should go to the same destination, but not go the same track (11:6).

His reflections were supported by a teacher from the other Norwegian school who claimed, "it's too much that [students] are supposed to be squeezed through the same wringer [*kverna*]" (18:8) and further explained how students should have been grouped by ability levels rather than mixed

groups. Another Norwegian teacher brought up the issue of low achievers when she stated that “the comprehensive school is a derision to the low achievers” [*enhetsskolen er et hån mot de svake*] (14:3), while a fourth teacher explained how the high achievers were left behind in provision of individual needs. She explained, “it is no differentiation in this school” (13:6) and further rated the provision for individual needs to be a two on a scale from 1-10, where one was the lowest value. The Norwegian teachers experiences of individual need provision was reflected through one particular statement, “the comprehensive school is not necessary the best approach” (11:4). The same teacher further described an alternative in creating “departments or divide the school a bit (...) and group more according to their potential” (11:4-5). The possibilities to meet individual needs in a comprehensive school system was further questioned by his colleague who determinedly claimed that “the comprehensive school system has given worse life quality and worse learning potential to very many students (...), especially for those with special needs (14:3). She continued “so you really harm them. A child with ADHD has to sit in a regular classroom and follow regular teaching. It is close to breaking their human rights” (14:3).

A contrast to Norway was evident in the issue of organising. The Norwegians complained about the system, while the English participants expressed satisfaction with ability group organising. The organising of ability sets was frequently mentioned and described as three categories; top ability sets; lower ability sets and mixed ability sets. Furthermore, the organising in three ability sets was explained in terms of creating more homogeneous groups, to meet more students at their ability level as measured in test such as CAP, SATs and other national or local tests and assessments. One English teacher was asked to categorise her students in three levels and to explain her selection. She underlined very clearly that her role was passive in the selection and how the ability sets were organised by managers rather than teachers. She explains, “I don’t select them. So I haven’t selected those groups (...). This is something from department level we have looked at, and looking at how best to meet the needs of those students” (7:5).

Other English participants confirmed that managers had the responsibility for categorising the students into different ability sets. Furthermore, all English participants underlined how the school was organised in three ability sets. One of them explained how “we have the idea that in some subjects the class is set when it comes to ability” (8:5), while another teacher described how they “set the children into high, middle and low ability groupings” and “tended to try to split it roughly in equal thirds” (1:7). Another English teacher from the other school confirmed the organising of ability sets and explained how “there are five classes divided into one top set,

of the most able students. Three equal mixed ability groups and then one low ability class which tends to be a little bit smaller” (8:2).

The Norwegian participants expressed frustration at the wide spectrum of student needs in the comprehensive school system. Their English colleagues solved that issue by ability group organising, while the Norwegian teachers found another solution to meet individual needs; the working plan [*arbeidsplanen*]. The working plans were explained as schedules that varied in duration from one to several weeks, containing homework, school tasks and themes. The plans were structured in three ability levels and were carried out by the teachers.

One Norwegian teacher explained how he used the working plan to meet all students in the beginning of his profession: “we wrote the same plan for everyone and I thought that everyone had to do the same” (11:3), but he further explained how the need for adjusted teaching made him make working plans for three different ability levels. Another Norwegian teacher described how individual need provision is covered by the structure of three ability levels:

The working plan is divided in three sections in terms of the tasks (...). It is organised in three levels and make us adjust the teaching with difficult tasks for the high achiever group and the average students. So, when we make plans for 3-4 weeks do we think about classroom teaching and tasks for the student” (16:7).

The idea about three different ability levels in the working plan was also confirmed by other Norwegian participants, who explained how it is “a trisection on their working plan where they can choose between three different ability levels” (17:5) and how “the working plan is organised in three levels. In addition, we write individual plans for especially high achievers and students who struggle with reading and learning in general” (10:3). The participants tended to explain the working plan as a natural tool for meeting individual needs, but one teacher questioned how the low achieving students could use it. She claimed, in frustration that:

You can’t expect them to understand when we are mixing around on the timetables and give them working plans for two weeks with 6-8 sheets. You can’t expect that they understand it and are motivated to do the work” (14:5).

Special Need Organising

The importance of a systematic special needs function and processes was emphasised by the English participants. One issue was the importance of a SEN coordinator to help to identify students’ issues and allocation of resources. One teacher summarised it well when she explained:

Support assistants come in to classes and are attached to students that have needs (...). That's managed by our SEN coordinator (...). That helps make sure that the contents are covered and their understanding is good and it keeps them moving on and helps with various work" (4:4).

In spite of this support, it was further explained that there can be problems as "we rely on a network to pick up [individual needs]. I think there is a huge majority that are lost and that are not addressed fully" (7:4). On the other side, the same teacher emphasised how "the pastoral system is good and deals with problems" (7:4). The pastoral system was also seen as an important additional service where "non-teaching staff is working in the pastoral system" (5:7) helped in supporting and guiding teachers in the provision for individual needs. It was further emphasised how teachers had support not only from SEN coordinators and the pastoral system, but also from school year managers and special needs departments.

Unlike the English teachers, the Norwegians did not describe any systematic special need organising in their school. One Norwegian teacher emphasised the importance of their only special need teacher, who taught three days every week, but a systematic organising was absent. The same teacher expressed satisfaction with how the special need teacher was able to get close to the students' social and academic needs. He explained how "her timetable contains groups of students who need individual teaching. Very, very good. Then she knows the students, what they want and what they need. It should have been much more of that" (11:4). One single teacher from the other Norwegian school expressed satisfaction with special need teachers, but no clear organising was evident. He questioned why the special need teachers were not replaced during sick leave. He explained:

(...) if they are gone because of sickness or things like that, no replacements appear. Then it just ceases (...), so it can be very much up and down in terms of how students with special needs are followed up (18:6).

The absence of special need provision further dominated the Norwegian answers. One of the teachers explained in frustration how "it is up to the staff in class to give them as many challenges as possible. That's all" (13:5), while another claimed that "we have students who require both special need teacher and support assistant in all teaching, but are only offered 4-5 hours" [*vi har elever som har krav på både spesialpedagog og assistent i alle timer, men det får det tilbudet i bare 4-5 timer*] (16:4). It was further described how a lack of special need organising could affect both students and teachers. One teacher described how "some students are dependent on individual teaching in many subjects (...). And it is very frustrating to teach a lesson where you know you should have been doing something else to meet their levels" (11:3).

Another Norwegian teacher explained how some few students could destroy her teaching, and further indicated the absence of special needs organising. She explained, “the dream situation would be if 2-3 of those with the biggest behaviour issues were removed. They do unfortunately destroy a lot for those who really want to learn” (19:6). A teacher from the other school supported her views. She claimed that “one area of Oslo should have a school which are specialists in special need classes or special need groups, and that to some degree can be integrated and to some degree be isolated from the others” (14:3).

The difference between Norway and England was further visible in the special needs organising. The English special needs education did not only contain SEN coordinators and SEN assistants, but was also evident in the organising of the schools. One English participant explained how the school was organised in year groups, with their own year managers that have the “purpose to support and guide the year group” (2:8). In addition, special needs department were really appreciated. Another English teacher expressed that “the special needs department, which oversees the whole of key stage 3 and 4, it’s tremendous, absolutely tremendous” (5:7). The individual need units were also used to solve special issues and the same teacher emphasised how this additional unit “work very well indeed” (5:4). One English teacher underlined how the special needs department worked to “withdraw children from certain lessons and give them emotional and psychological support” (1:5).

Teaching Methods

Unlike the Norwegian teachers, the English teachers did not put as much focus on teaching methods in individual need provision, but were more focused on students’ abilities to make use of the teaching. One English participant explained that a teacher has “to be very patient, to be ready to explain and re-explain again in different ways, concepts and ideas for the children to be able to understand” (1:3), but methodological approaches were not further discussed. Another English teacher explained more about how different needs were provided for through different teaching methods. She explained, “not all students learn effectively in the same manner. (...), you make sure you have a range of teaching styles, so that everyone in the classroom can absorb the information (4:5).

These two teachers represent the English issue of diversity of teaching methods, while the variations of teaching methods were outlined as a specific tool in the Norwegian organising of teaching. The Norwegian teachers explained that academic content should be presented differently because students’ learn and perceive knowledge in different ways. This was evident

from one Norwegian participant who emphasised how the students' different needs are fulfilled through a wide range of teaching methods. He explained, "they work with completely different things (...). Not necessarily in terms of themes. They might work on the same themes and things like that, but it might be a big difference in methodological approach" (15:7). A colleague at the same school supported his views, but directed them more towards the low achievers. The teacher explained the importance of "how the low achievers work with a lot of things. That they learn how to write down key words, how to make use of mind maps, which working methods they use after a while" (16:6).

The importance of meeting low achievers with a variety of methods was further emphasised by a teacher who stated that "variation of teaching methods" (19:6) was important to meet those students. The value placed on various teaching methods in Norway was further confirmed by teachers who claimed that meeting individual needs contains a "huge emphasis on teaching methods" (12:4). This was exemplified by a colleague in the same school:

Teaching methods do vary. Sometimes do I talk most of the time, sometimes is it conversation and they might read texts as well. Try to learn to make use of key words and discuss what they have read (11:5).

The approach towards diversity of teaching methods differed between Norway and England. This was evident when an English teacher explained how students have the responsibility to learn themselves rather than to expect a diversity of teaching methods. He claimed, "students work to teach themselves in a lot of ways" (5:7), while another English teacher focused on students as receivers of her teaching style and described her ideal class as "students who respond well to my teaching style" (6:6).

6.6 Teaching Resources

This category refers to teachers' interpretations and experiences of their own framework and conditions to meet individual needs in their teaching. Issues such as time, class size and use of support assistants were included in the interview guide, but another issues were also brought up at the participants' initiative. The engagement around these issues and how they are related to working conditions made it natural to cluster them as one category, with three sub-sections; time; class size; support assistants. In the interview schedule, some questions were directed towards resources (question 7, 13, 14), but the participants did also raise the issue through more open questions on class and opportunities (question 5, 11, 19, 21, 23).

6.6.1 Findings

Time

The experience of and interpretation of time frames in terms of meeting individual needs went in two distinct directions. The participants who expressed frustration about a lack of time to prepare their work were represented in both England and Norway. The participants who expressed satisfaction with their time frames were only located in England. One example in terms of a lack of time was the English teacher who explained how you “are devoting your life to it (...) because I am working nearly every evening at home and during the weekends, so you have to be prepared to make teaching an intrinsic part of your life” (1:2). Another English teacher started to laugh when she answered the question of time for preparations to meet individual need. She explained how “teachers do never have enough time (...). There is never enough time. Never enough time for lesson planning, marking, meeting students one to one. Both with students and with fellows and teachers (7:8). Furthermore, she explained how a lack of time reduced the quality of her work, “the time, the time. How many times do I deliver what I would class as a standard lesson because I haven’t had time to do anything with it? And having time to develop it” (7:8).

The Norwegian participants clearly supported the issue of the lack of time. They explained how a lack of time affected their daily life and their ability to plan for, and make provision for, individual needs. One of them described how her time frame “explodes all the time and all over (...). The time we have at our disposal, according to our working contracts and things like that have never been enough. And will probably never be, either (10:3).

The frustration about lack of time was supported by Norwegian colleagues who explained how time to provide for individual needs “is very tight. Really lack of time to the job” (11:3) and how lack of time is “maybe the biggest frustration in being a teacher. The day and night need more hours if I should be able to do a good job” (17:2). Another Norwegian teacher complained about the workload and how “it’s lack of time because we have a lot of other administrative tasks at school” (16:2). This was supported by a Norwegian colleague who explained how provision for individual needs “is important, but it is difficult to realise because of a lack of time. You do the best you can with the time you have available” (13:2), while a teacher from the other Norwegian school claimed with frustration:

Well, money is good. Computer equipment is good as well. But time. Give me time! The feeling of always be in lack of time. Always a bit too late. Always be on the run. It is extremely stressing. Then you think when you are home: “why didn’t I have time for that, why

couldn't I take that conversation?" Well, because someone is waiting for me another place" (15:8).

The time issues were further explained, in terms of how "it is a huge resource in itself to have enough time for every individual student" [*det er en enorm ressurs i seg selv å ha god nok tid til hver elev*] (19:5) and the degree of meeting low achievers needs was dependent on "if I have time for them or not" (18:7). The latter teacher also claimed that time was a valued resource, and that a consequence of not reducing student numbers in class and giving more time for preparations will result in a "political fiasco" (18:5). A teacher from the other school laughed when she explained the bad feeling of never being well prepared:

It is never enough [time], but in the teacher profession you can plan yourself to death (...). You are supposed to plan for every individual in your class or group, and for three levels. What's the limit? The question might be how you deal with your own conscience and how bad conscience you are able to deal with. That might be the question (12:2).

The question of having a bad conscience about this lack of time was not considered by most of the English participants. One teacher linked the preparation time to experience when she explained how her use of time was radically reduced from her first year of teaching, compared to her present situation. She explained, "It was a lot harder the first year of teaching (...). Now I do have a background, I just tweak things and know how to approach things (...)" (6:2). Another teacher brought up the issue of never being satisfied and how some teachers put unrealistic demands on themselves. He confidently claimed:

I think we have the right amount of time. I think if you are a perfectionist as a teacher, you can spend every hour under the sun, producing lessons and still feel that you are not doing a very good job. I think it is important for a teacher not to be a perfectionist because then you will drive yourself mad and never be happy (...). I think we've got enough time (8:3).

Class Size

A further issue in the teaching conditions was the size of different classes. Some English teachers did not mention class size as a problematic issue in meeting of individual needs, while others were very specific about the advantage of small student numbers for providing for individual need. One of the English teachers presented the class size as unproblematic. She described how she could provide individual needs in a homogenous ability group of normal size. She explained how "generally it's not too much of a problem because we do group children according to abilities (...), so we do tend to teach to the majority and any adjustments to individual needs tends to happen during the lesson" (2:2). The same teacher expressed satisfaction with the ability group organising, but did also bring up the issue of special need students in the classroom. She described her experience of how only one special need student can lead to practical challenges:

Apart from special cases like in year 9, I have one girl who is partly sighted. So any written material have to be blown up in advance and sometimes I don't have time to do that and then it's a problem (2:2).

It was often mentioned that high ability sets had higher numbers of students, while the lower sets were organised with lower numbers of students. The lower ability groups were explained as a wider spectrum of needs and more challenging to teach. In spite of this, one teacher was especially clear about how a high number of students challenged her provision in terms of individual needs. She claimed that the ideal class should be smaller. Furthermore she explained that an ideal number would be 20-22 students in each class, because the class size is one of the factors that "restrict my teaching more than anything else" (7:8). The argument was further supported by a teacher from the other English school who claimed that "one of the most important factors is simply the number of students in the classroom, in relation to the numbers of teachers, in other words the pupil-teacher ratio" (1:8). He further argued how the number of students should be between 15-20 students per teacher because "it does make a difference to the ability of that teacher to meet the needs of the individual children" (1:8).

The English participants expressed various experiences in terms of class size. Their experiences of big classes are not necessarily negative, but they do express the need for reduced class size in classes containing special needs students or low achievers. The Norwegian data support the latter experience, and reveals a distinctive preference for small classes. The two Norwegian schools had a different organising structure in terms of student-teacher ratio. One school was organised in groups of approximately 17, while the other school was organised in classes of 30 students. In spite of this, the issue of class size was underlined in both schools.

One Norwegian participant argued that organising groups is a resource which can be used to "create a certain dynamic or specific learning outcomes" (12:5), while another Norwegian teacher explained how the number of students in a classroom made a big difference in her planning to meet individual needs:

Everyone is supposed to learn the same themes, but in different ways. If you have a class of six students is it easy to plan differently for them. It's much worse when you have 30 or 32, which we sometimes have. And we have to make a lesson which suits all" (10:3).

Another Norwegian teacher expressed how "we need much more resources to split students into more unequal groups. A much higher degree of inequality, because that's what's important for them. That's all I have to say about that" (18:8), while another participant supported his view, "the problem is that we don't have enough resources. If they, for instance sit in smaller groups

is it possible to help and supervise them, and they are motivated to learn” (16:4). Furthermore, one Norwegian participant wished for smaller classes to be able to observe all students’ individual needs. He underlined that “it is not easy [to observe individual needs] when you have 28-29 other students in class” (10:5). Another Norwegian teacher stated that a class with low achievers needs a higher teacher-student ratio, while a participant from the other school with 17 students in class supported her opinion:

It is in many ways comfortable to teach small groups. That’s really something I hope everyone can experience. To teach small groups. It is two different worlds really. It is really good to have it like that. I will claim so. To be able to follow up the students. Following up 17 is totally different from following up 30. To observe each one of them. You get a better overview, so all schools should have been like that. At least in terms of class size” (15:2).

Two Norwegian teachers presented another approach to the issue of class size, where one described the possibility to take some students out of class as a good way to provide for their individual needs. The first teacher explained how “they have more advantage in that, than in being in class with 30 others where everything just flies above their heads (...). It’s impossible to be everywhere” (11:3).

The second teacher argued that class size was a requirement to be able to cover individual needs, while a colleague claimed that some students might need to be taken outside of the classroom to learn effectively and that “more resources should be used on the students we know have special needs” (15:5).

Support Assistants

The support assistants can be seen as an extra resource for teachers and are often attached to lower ability students. This was evident in the participants’ experiences of resource allocation and how the support assistants were used in the classroom. The Norwegian participants expressed positive experiences of support assistants, but also that there was a lack of them in the teaching. English teachers described the opposite in that they have a high amount of support assistants, while their effectiveness varied.

The first Norwegian critique and frustration in terms of a lack of support assistants was one teacher’s experiences of sick leave and replacements. The participant placed a high value on support assistants attached to some students, but was frustrated about the lack of replacements when the assistants were out of work; “(...) if they are gone because of sickness or things like that, no replacements appear” and “it can be very much up and down in terms of how students with special needs are followed up” (18:6). The support assistants were appreciated by the

English teachers as well, and were also attached to the low achievers. One English teacher laughed when she confirmed this by claiming that “I don’t have any [support assistants] because I’ve got the top sets, so I don’t need any apparently” (3:5). Another English teacher commented on the allocation of support assistants: “I think we have 40 or so and we have around 100 teachers, so there are a lot of support assistants. And they tend to work with the low ability students. They are a bonus” (8:6).

The appearance of support assistants did vary, but the importance of them is underlined in both England and Norway. One Norwegian teacher emphasised the significance of support assistants for the special needs students. She despairingly explained how the school was unable to cover the students’ needs:

We don’t get what the students are obliged to. We don’t. We have more students that entitle to assistant-hours, but they don’t get it. Those recommended to be alone with a supportive assistant don’t get it. So they save money and the students don’t get what they are obliged (17:4).

The advantages of support assistants were also emphasised by another Norwegian teacher in her explanation of them, ”you can never get enough, but this year do we have two very good assistants” (10:4). She further explains their role as the teachers’ ‘right hand’ and that “they are basically in the classes to help some few students who struggle for a short or long while” (10:4).

Another Norwegian teacher explains how his opportunity to meet other students’ needs, increased through the help from a support assistant, and he further stated the advantage of having a support assistant to cover a single student’s need. He explained, “I have a supportive assistant in my classroom for some hours and he is there to help a student because he struggles in school” (11:7).

The English appreciation of support assistants is exemplified by a teacher who explained how “they can help and they can make a big difference” (5:5). A second English teacher who mainly taught homogeneous groups, explained that “if she [one specific student] does not [have assistants], it makes things very difficult to manage another 24 [students]” (2:4). She was supported by a third English teacher who felt the assistant “helps make sure that contents are covered and their understanding is good and keep moving on and help with various work” (7:4).

In spite of the appreciation of support assistants, one English teacher brought up the issue of their qualifications. She explains that she has “a lot of support assistants which is being on and off”, but also that “it has been good in the classes when I got them” (9:4).

Another English teacher confirmed the issue qualifications when he questioned the effectiveness of the assistants. First he defined their role as “to come to certain lessons to support individual children that have special educational needs, or sometimes support smaller groups” (1:5), then he further explained that “the support assistants in ICT tend to be effective, but not fully effective. Often because of their weak ICT skills.” Another teacher questioned the teacher-assistant collaboration and expressed that “we have assistants and they come in, but we don’t liaise them enough (...). They are just in there helping. But there is no real direction (4:5).

6.7 Summary

The analysis of the data revealed six categories for further investigation. Similarities and differences have been presented through this chapter and are further summarised in this section.

Similarities

Several similarities between the concept of equality and individual need provision in England and Norway appeared in this study. The first similarities were evident in the teachers’ interpretations of equality. The concept was interpreted as equal opportunities to education and further underlined that all students have different needs. A theoretically cross-national understanding was evident, but in spite of this, practical experiences of equality differed. The Norwegian experiences were related to equal opportunities *within* the classroom, while the English teachers focused on school *access*.

A further similarity was the teachers’ interpretations and experiences of socio-economic background as a determining factor to individual need provision. The participants in both countries acknowledged that different socio-economic background affected educational opportunities. English teachers were especially focused on how social class determined students’ educational opportunities.

The teachers had a cross-national understanding in the importance of making assessments to provide individual need. The Norwegian teachers were mostly concerned about the low and/or special need students in that concern, while the English participants also included the high and

average achievers. Teacher-student familiarity was considered as an important tool in individual need assessments in both countries.

Differences

One of several differences between the Norwegian and English teachers were the English emphasise on students' responsibility. It was described as students' responsibility to grasp the opportunities and activities they were offered and were absent in the Norwegian teachers' answers.

Another difference between the nations was how the schools were organised. The English students were organised in three homogeneous ability groups, while the Norwegian teachers were used to bigger classes and high degree of social and academically student diversity. English teachers explained how the schools had a special need education organising, while the Norwegian teachers mainly explained lack of it. Further were teaching methods considered as an important tool by the Norwegian teachers. The idea of organise teaching and provide individual needs by a variety of methods were dominant. The English teachers did not put especially focus to this.

Time, class size and support assistants were valued as important resources to provide individual needs in both England and Norway, but the practical experiences were different. Norwegian teachers expressed lack of time, support assistants and big classes as an obstacle to provide individual needs. The English teachers were slightly divided in the view of time and use of support assistants, but positive experiences dominated the answers. Class size in England was not brought up as a challenge in individual needs provision, but homogeneous ability groups were appreciated.

This chapter has presented educational similarities and differences between English and Norwegian teachers' interpretations of equality and individual needs. The differences and similarities of the results are further discussed and concluded in chapter seven.

7 Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter contains discussions of the findings in this study. The chapter is divided in two parts:

1. Discussion (7.1 - 7.5)
2. Conclusions (7.6)

The discussion section covers a summary of the study (7.1), discussion of the main themes (7.2), practice and culture (7.3), teachers' tools (7.4) and socio-economic background (7.5). The conclusion section contains a brief summary of the whole study (7.6.1), limitations of the research (7.6.2), impact on research and policy (7.6.3), suggestions for further research (7.6.4) and a conclusion of this study (7.6.5).

7.1 Summary of the Study

This study has investigated teachers' perspectives on equality and individual need provision in England and Norway. Differences and similarities between the nations have been a central focus as along with cultural influences on policy and practice. This section presents the three research questions, combined with a brief summary of the findings related to each question:-

1. What are teachers' interpretations and experiences of equality and provision of individual needs in the Norwegian and English education systems?

The participants in England and Norway had similar interpretations and experiences of socio-economic background as a significant factor in equality and individual need provision. The English teachers explained how social class determines students' school choice, while the Norwegian teachers emphasised that all have access to the same system but that inequality is evident across socio-economic statuses. In other words, inequality appeared in both countries, but was represented by school choice in England and home conditions in Norway. The teachers' in both countries acknowledged that all students have different needs because of their socio-economic background. The Norwegian teachers explained their use of different teaching methods, working plans and adjusted teaching to meet all needs, while their English colleagues focused on provision of wide-range activities, personalised learning and student responsibility. Common in both approaches is a sense of the importance of knowledge about individual students to provide for their needs. A further interesting issue that emerged was how the

Norwegian teachers emphasised individual need provision for the low achievers, while the English teachers saw this as relevant for all students. Interpretations and experiences of resources available also varied. The English teachers expressed satisfaction with support assistant rates and special need departments, while the Norwegian participants critiqued these issues. There was further agreement about the benefit of teaching small classes or groups in terms of being able to provide for individual needs, while the experience of time varied between the countries. Norwegian teachers clearly expressed their sense of having a lack of time, while views on this issue varied more in England. Furthermore, it is important to note that the English schools contain a wide and structured special need approach. The English teachers refer to a special needs structure, containing special needs departments, support assistants, year managers, SEN coordinators and pastoral systems, while the Norwegian teachers rarely mention any special needs support.

2. What are the main differences and similarities in the approach of meeting individual needs in English and Norwegian education policies?

The education policies of England and Norway have differences and similarities, although the overall vision of equal opportunities and historical emphasis on a comprehensive school approach are both examples of the latter. In spite of this, the detailed policies on individual need provision vary. First of all, the English emphasis on parental choice and school diversity differs from the Norwegian approach where 98 percent of schools are public and comprehensive (SSB, 2009). Another difference is the focus upon adjusted teaching in the Norwegian *core curriculum*, while the English curriculum is focused towards personalised learning (see appendix A). A further related issue is that the English schools organise students according to ability levels, while their Norwegian colleagues are restricted from using this approach over longer periods in *Opplæringslova* (Lovdata, 2008). In this regard, assessment of needs is a significant issue in England. It is not that it is absent in Norway, but the English assessment of *all* students leads to a difference. This is linked to the pragmatic English approach of grouping students in ability groups, while the Norwegian assessments are directed towards special need or low achieving students only. Another difference is evident in the English focus on *ECM*, which represents a broad approach to social issues. This policy means that teachers' main responsibility is directed towards academic aims from the curriculum, while the *ECM strategy* (DCSF, 2004c) involves other professionals, for example health services and child centres, in addressing wider needs.

3. What influence does culture have upon the implementation of education policy in England and Norway, and in particular, the concepts of equality and individual need?

Teachers' practices in England and Norway differed in interpretations and experiences of equality and individual need provision. Current policy remains focused on opportunities for all and individual development, but in spite of these similarities, practice did differ. Based on these differences, it is natural to believe that policies are shaped by cultural contexts including curriculum traditions. The English curriculum traditions are related to essentialism, while the Norwegian tradition is directed towards encyclopaedism. This can be seen in policy developments, teaching methods and educational priorities. In terms of England, essentialism is illustrated by teachers' descriptions of a pedagogical practice based upon student differences. These differences are especially clear when we consider the ability grouping approach and the massive special need system. In addition, an education market is evident when the wealthiest parents are able to pay for their children's' education, while others have limited opportunities to choose. Parents' financial positions partly determine student opportunities. This reinforces the English educational history defined by social class and individualism. In comparison, the Norwegian curriculum traditions stand as a contradiction to these ideas: they focus on egalitarianism and school access for all, and are related to the tradition of encyclopaedism. The Norwegian participants confirmed this through their descriptions of pedagogical practice. First of all, it was explained that individual need provision was fulfilled through diversity of teaching methods. This was explained as involving teaching all students in the same classroom, while making use of their preferred methods. In addition, this collective focus was confirmed by the lack of structured special needs provision. Essentially, all students were basically placed in the same classroom with very few resources attached to special needs students.

7.2 Main Themes

The results of this study address a wide spectrum of issues, so a brief section to identify and discuss these main themes is required. The themes are also set in context with the theoretical framework and other literature. The main themes are discussed under three headlines. All of these headlines reflect essential findings in this study. First of all *practice and culture* discusses English and Norwegian practical and cultural issues (7.3). Second, the section *teachers' toolbox* (7.4) discusses what teachers require and use to provide for individual needs, but also the issue of equality. The third section is about *socio-economic background* (7.5) and this discussion

acknowledges that equality and individual need provision are linked to family background, but also parents influence on their child's education more broadly.

Equality

Equality is considered to be a legal right (Haydon, 2008) as are educational opportunities for all (Chitty, 2001). The participants in this study further emphasised that students are not the same and thereby have different needs. This is linked to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory where it is argued that cultural tools should be developed according to students' needs. In other words, some students benefit from different teaching more than others, which therefore means that equality is fulfilled when all students have opportunities to develop academically and socially. The Norwegian and English teachers also described another situation. The English teachers explained that social class determined educational opportunities: school choice and parents' financial positions were outlined as essential factors. In comparison, their Norwegian colleagues expressed the view that all students have access to schooling, but also that individual need provision within the schools varied. In this case, links can naturally be drawn back to the English tradition of essentialism and Norwegian encyclopaedism. The data confirms these links in descriptions of an English individualistic focus, while the Norwegian approach is described through collectivistic ideas, such as all students being taught in the same classroom. Thus, in neither instance was it possible for schools to meet the needs of all individuals or to provide equal access, inspite of policy rhetoric.

Socio-Economic Background

The participants in England and Norway underlined how students have unequal opportunities to education. The Norwegian teachers explained that students' variation in terms of competencies affected their individual needs provision, while the English teachers emphasised how social class determined access to schools. This indicates that parents' social, cultural and financial status influences how far individual needs provision takes place and brings the concepts described by Bourdieu out as clear factors (Crossley, 2005). According to Bourdieu, financial capital is an influential factor in being able to access cultural capital (Field, 2008), which can then be exchanged for further goods, such as education (Crossley, 2005). When English teachers say that social class determines school access, it is natural to believe that cultural capital and *field* plays a significant role in the selection of schools. Furthermore, selection of schools is also linked to essentialism and the idea of ability being related to social class and passed down through families. In this regard, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* explains how people respond to different social contexts (Garrett, 2009), in this case the influence of

education. The English participants explained how parents' aspirations and ambitions influence their children's individual needs provision, while the Norwegian teachers explained that parents influence on education takes place through collaboration with the schools. Some parents are basically able to set the standards of norms and values in schools, by influencing and generating social structures in practice (Robbins, 2000). Bourdieu's concept of *field* further stresses the relevance of parents' power to influence education. These *fields* are created as social relationships and structures (Robbins, 2000) and these give access to power (Crossley, 2005). Based upon this theory, parents have the power to influence education and individual need provision depending on their more or less powerful *fields*. Parents' structures and relationships are further maintained and reproduced through cultural and political actions (Edgar & Sedgewick, 2002).

Assessment of Need

Socio-cultural theory underlines that humans have different needs according to their background (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007). Teachers in both England and Norway underlined the importance of teacher-student familiarity in assessing individual need. A natural result of this is that all students should be assessed to fulfil the principles of equality and individual need provision. The English teachers confirmed this view, while their Norwegian colleagues were only focused on the low achievers and special needs students. Explanations of this are multiple, but it can be expected that a teachers' different *habitus* lead them to have different understandings and practices. The Norwegian approach indicates that assessments of high achievers is not a priority and raises the issue about how far high achievers should be seen as special needs students (Kirk et al., 2006). The Norwegian teachers aim to "see" all the students was explained as difficult to do in practice, but still marks a contradiction to the ideal visions of equality and individual need provision described. Many explanations can be given for this, but a link to Habermas (1972) and his understanding of communication and mutual understanding is relevant. In comparison, the English link between individual need policy and practice is stronger. This is evident through the pragmatic approach of assessments being conducted for all students. Furthermore, these national differences again reflect the English emphasis on individualism, while the Norwegian approach illustrates an emphasis on collectivism.

School Circumstances

Socio-cultural theory also underlines how all individuals are influenced by culture (Daniels, 2001) and that student outcome is therefore expected to differ (Wells & Claxton, 2002). This means that students have different needs and that schools have to take this into consideration to

create good circumstances for teaching and learning. School circumstances do play a part in determining the possibilities for equal opportunities and individual need provision. The participants described different national school circumstances that were most evident in the organisation of regular, special needs classes or groups. One idea behind this was to create ability groups that are more homogeneous and to narrow the academic spectrum in any one group. This issue was well catered for in England, while the low degree of such organisation was a focus for teachers in Norway. This national distinction is interesting in terms of teachers' capability to teach in a way that suits a wide spectrum of individual needs, but also how teachers' practice are determined by their *habitus*. Furthermore, the issue of organising appears in what Vygotsky calls cultural tools (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007). In this regard, the Norwegian focus upon collective visions (Baune, 2007) influenced the Norwegian approach to organising teaching, while the English approach emphasises individualism and personalisation (Ball, 2008). It is relevant then to see special needs provision from these same perspectives: English teachers described a well structured special need system, while the Norwegian teachers expressed concern about the lack of it and questioned the benefit of having special needs students in the same class or group along with regular students. Vygotsky also explains how cultural differences lead to different practice and compensatory strategies (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007). This process can be seen in 'tools' of adjusted teaching, working plan and diversity of teaching methods as found in Norway, while the English 'tools' are represented by ability grouping, wider perspective on opportunities and expectations of students' own responsibility.

Teachers' Resources

Teachers' resources can contain a wide spectrum of alternatives, but three resources were underlined as especially useful in this study: support assistants, class size and time. It is also expected that classes based on diversity should receive additional resources (Barrow, 2008), but results from this study question if this is realised in practice. The English participants were generally satisfied with their resource situation, but at the same time did underline the importance of resources. The Norwegian situation was the opposite. Teachers considered support assistants, class sizes and time to be key resources, but expressed a lack of them. This issue makes Habermas' (1972) ideas about communication interesting, and raises the relevant question: are the political decisions based on strategic actions rather than practitioners' influence through communicative action (Sitton, 2003)? Furthermore, is it expected that teachers should provide equal opportunities and meet individual needs without any additional resources? Based upon the data, policymakers describe utopian visions without dealing with these practical

considerations. Implementation gaps in individual need provision are evident in Norway, while the English gaps are linked to equality.

Students' Responsibility

The socio-cultural theory explains how different needs appear because of diverse social and cultural backgrounds amongst students (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007). That student diversity further affects teachers' practice of equality and individual need provision (Capel et al., 2005) is not surprising, but students' responsibility, as active players in the learning process, should also be focused on. The Norwegian teachers did not put emphasise on this, while their English colleagues expected the students to take responsibility for their educational choices. Vygotsky explains that humans are products of cultural processes (Daniels, 2001) and this is relevant in how the English teaching approach differs from the Norwegian one. In addition, Bourdieu explains how different *habitus* shapes different behaviour (Robbins, 2000), in this case English and Norwegian teacher practice. One aspect derived from the data in this case is the English focus on offering a wide-spectrum of opportunities and then expecting student responsibility to play a part. It is likely that such an approach puts more individual responsibility in place, to take an active part in educational choices and demands for their own development and results. This is further supported by English educational traditions of individualism, differentiation and personalisation in teaching (Ball, 2008). Student responsibility therefore represents a product of English culture, while the Norwegian focus on collectivism (Baune, 2007) and adjusted teaching indicates a lower sense of responsibility or a active students role in their educational future. In other words, the focus on student responsibility reflects the English curriculum traditions of essentialism, while the Norwegian absence of this reflects encyclopaedism.

7.3 Practice and Culture

One of the main aims in this study is to highlight teachers' perspectives on equality and individual need provision. Pedagogy is culturally developed (Alexander, 2008) and this makes it natural to investigate cultural aspects of education and look at teaching practice as an indicator of cultural differences. Taking this into consideration, Habermas (1972) makes a significant point when he argues that teachers should be given a voice in developing these perspectives and further included in policy making. Another indicator of culture is curriculum history. This is relevant because curricula reflect the culture (Feinberg, 2008) and the societies they were created in (Erben & Dickinson, 2004). In other words, a culture influences pedagogical practice

and is reflected through teachers' perspectives. This makes it natural to question what values, norms, traditions and heritage pedagogy is based upon.

The English teachers had different experiences of equality and individual need provision than their Norwegian colleagues. Taking their different *habitus* into consideration, this is not surprising. The Norwegian culture is evident through an emphasis on collectivism and encyclopaedism, while individualism and essentialism illustrates the English education context. This is exemplified through the English opportunities to individualise curricula. Furthermore, this is confirmed in the English data on how teachers are allocated different ability sets and deal with less numbers of social issues. The English focus upon every student's individual potential and development seems to contribute to teachers' awareness of individual need in different subjects. This makes it clearer that the English participants are professional teachers rather than organisers, social workers or responsible for other social roles. Furthermore, it is also natural to believe that the English focus on individualised curricula contributed to their awareness of individual needs. In this case, the curriculum communicates the political aim of individualisation. Whether this is a result of Habermas' theory of communicative or strategic action (Sitton, 2003) is unanswered, but it does indicate a mutual understanding between teachers and policy makers. This stands as a contrast to the Norwegian data, where teachers' social roles were more strongly emphasised. This distinction makes it natural to question if the Norwegian schools function as what Lingard (2009) calls a 'political garbage bin' for social issues.

It is interesting that the Norwegian participants criticise the comprehensive school system. The participants acknowledge that all students have different needs, so it is likely that the comprehensive values of diversity, equality and individual need provision (Haydon, 2008) offers a beneficial approach. In contrast, the heavily critique of the system makes it natural to question whether these comprehensive values are realised in practice. This again raises Habermas' (1972) explanations about communication. Is the link between theory and practice based upon a mutual understanding or are implementation gaps evident? The Norwegian teachers describe socio-economic diversity in the classrooms, but also challenges of providing for equality and individual needs. In terms of access, approximately 98 percent of the Norwegian compulsory schooling students attend public schools, while the rest attend private or special need schools (SSB, 2009). This statistic creates further links to Norwegian values such as unity, egalitarianism and curriculum traditions of encyclopaedism. Based upon this, the practical question of equality is in not about access, but whether everyone is provided with equal

opportunities and individual needs are met *within* the schools. *Opplæringslova* § 1-3 (Lovdata, 2008) is clear in students' rights to receive adjusted teaching and satisfactory benefits from teaching, but according to the data, implementation gaps appear. This suggests that Habermas (1972) was right when he argued that practitioners should be included to improve policy development. The Norwegian culture of collectivism is evident in school access, but is heavily questioned in the practice of individual need provision. In practice, daily life teaching was explained to include a wide diversity of students along with a lack of time, and lack of support and special need organising. A natural question appears; should all needs be catered for through diversity in the classroom, or does this work as an obstacle to the same aim. An answer to this is complex, but the questions makes it interesting to investigate the individual need provision in another culture and *habitus*, such as the English one, with its emphasis on individualism. This allows asking how the individualistic culture influences equality and individual need provision?

The English participants explained, as the Norwegians did, that all students have different needs, but differed in their explanations. First of all, it was acknowledged that socio-economic background determined students' opportunities in terms of school choice. This makes Bourdieu's explanations of cultural capital and *field* relevant (Crossley, 2005), as these are evident when the wealthiest parents can choose the best schools. These individualistic aspects are confirmed in a society where inequality has taken on a cultural form (Jones, 2008). In spite of this, the participants explained the significance of offering the students a wide spectrum of opportunities within the schools to provide for individual needs. The opportunities were explained as a diversity of learning activities that could be chosen by the students. In addition, the expectations about student responsibility were underlined in the English data. Students are seen as heavily responsible in terms of grasping opportunities and developing academically and socially. This confirms the individual culture rather than the collectivist idea that all should be taught the same content in the same classroom. The individualistic approach to education is also evident in the way English schools are organised. The Norwegian culture of collectivism was demonstrated in organising schools around student diversity, while all of their English colleagues described working with different ability sets. The approach to organising was influenced by the idea that all students should have equal opportunities to succeed on their level. The approach to organising schools therefore illustrates some of the cultural differences between England and Norway. The Norwegian education system has reduced its emphasis on academic aims (Werle & Sivesind, 2008), while the English education system has historical traditions focused on individualism (McLean, 1995).

As stated above, individual needs provision was covered in a more wide-ranging way within the English schools than in Norway. The Norwegian teachers were responsible for providing for individual need within mixed ability classes and with only a little additional help, while their English colleagues experienced the opposite, with a great deal of additional help within and outside the classroom. Vygotsky claimed that cultural tools should be developed according to the cultural context and needs (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007), processes which are evident in the different use of tools in the two countries. In this regard, the English participants emphasised offering a wide spectrum of opportunities, while the Norwegian participants underlined the significance of variation in teaching methods. The Norwegian teachers explained how varying teaching methods was beneficial because the students could explore and use the methods that fitted them best. However, one natural question appears from this; to what degree are the students able to receive and make use of the variety of methods? That some students are able to make use of most methods would not be surprising, but it should also be taken into consideration that many students are not able to use many such approaches. None of the Norwegian teachers mentioned any systematic approach, or guiding aims in their use of different methods. This makes it natural to believe that teaching methods were used quite randomly and pitched at the average level rather than using specific methods targeted towards specific needs. If so, this diversity in teaching methods may indicate an approach focused on collectivism and one likely to fail as a tool for individual needs provision. A similar situation is evident in the idea of adjusted teaching. The Norwegian *core curriculum* (KUF, 1997) claims that all students should be provided equal opportunities, which also is supported by *Opplæringslova* §1-3 (Lovdata, 2008). This section refers to teachers' obligations to adjust their teaching according to individual students' ability levels and requirements. The idea of adjusted teaching has relevance in terms of what Vygotsky calls cultural tools (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007), but also represents an implementation gap if some students are left behind by the adjustments made. Based on results from this study, it should be questioned if this happens. The Norwegian teachers explained how they tried to use adjusted teaching in meeting individual needs, but how they often felt they failed because of challenging factors such as time, class size, special need students, lack of support and the approaches taken to organising schools. The teachers try to make use of cultural tools, but do not have the working conditions to make use of them. The diversity of students makes adjustments difficult and many students are not provided with teaching based upon their individual needs, because the task of teaching is too complex in many classrooms. A result of this is a pedagogy pitched for the majority rather than individuals. The political solution has been to establish adjusted teaching as a priority, but significant issues remain is how the concept is applied in practice (Bachmann & Haug, 2006). This means that

policymakers, based in cultures of collectivism, attempt to create a teaching approach that covers individual needs, but do not take into consideration how the concept does not, realistically, reflect those needs. The idea of adjusted teaching represents the Norwegian answer to individual needs provision in a situation where all students should be in the same classroom and learn the same content. In other words, adjusted teaching is a political and practical result of cultural collectivism.

The English participants did not mention the concept of adjusted teaching and hardly brought up diversity of teaching methods. A different set of tools was taken up to provide for individual needs. This approach was focused on students' responsibility to grasp the opportunities they were offered. The opportunities were described as different activities inside and outside the school that reflected the students' interests. Furthermore, it was emphasised that students should pick relevant activities for their development. The students' individual responsibility to their own teaching illustrates the individualistic education culture. The opportunities are offered in a way that takes account of a wide range of interests, in contrast to the Norwegian attempts to cover all needs within the same classroom. The individual focus provides a natural link with the political focus on personalised learning (Courcier, 2007), not only because it has relevance to several teaching contexts, but also because it is evident in significant political papers such as *ECM* (QCDA, 2007a). The political priority placed on personalised learning confirms the influence of English curriculum traditions of essentialism, but it is also reasonable to question the meaning and use of personalised learning. This concept, similarly to adjusted teaching, is politically created rather than practical derived (Dainton, 2004). The lack of a clear definition makes the practice of this concept diverse (Hartley, 2009), but it is interesting that it is linked to previous educational policies and approaches that confirm the influence of an individualistic culture. In this case, personalised learning is derived from historical educational concepts such as ability grouping, extra support, one-to-one tuition, individualised teaching (Courcier, 2007), child-centred education and personalised focus (Hartley, 2007). All of these concepts further confirm the English policy and culture of essentialism and individualism.

Another consequence of the cultural differences between the two countries is shown in the provision for special needs education. The participants in both England and Norway valued special needs teachers, but expressed different practical experiences; this is not surprising if their their different *habitus* are taken into consideration. First of all, the Norwegian teachers explained a situation with a high degree of student diversity in the classrooms, which also included special needs students. A classroom situation like this leads to two natural approaches;

first, additional resources are offered within the classroom; second, a structured special needs department with extra responsibility for students with those needs is established. Bearing these two approaches in mind, it is interesting that English and Norwegian *habitus* lead to different practices. The second alternative is often connected with withdrawing students from the classroom context. However, the Norwegian educational culture and ideas of collectivism assume that all students should be placed in the same classroom. The Norwegian participants confirmed this situation. The alternative of removing students from the classroom is therefore excluded, but a special need department could still be established and work within the classrooms. When national educational priorities are considered, it would be natural to believe that this would be the situation in Norway. In contrast, the teachers explained that a culture is in place where a structured special needs department is absent and only few resources are put into special needs teachers or support assistants. The culture of collectivism, in other words, functions as an obstacle to the teachers' interpretations of equality, and makes it harder for them to respond to different needs for different students.

If collectivism functions as an obstacle to equality and individual need provision, does a culture of English individualism function in a way that is more beneficial? It is tempting to make such an assumption, but the reality is, of course, more complex. The English participants, like the Norwegian's, emphasised that all students have different needs. They did also describe different experiences in terms of the two presented approaches; additional resources within the classroom and a structured special needs department focused on those with additional needs. First, the participants explained about having a high number of support assistants, especially in the mixed and low ability sets. The support assistants were mainly attached to special needs or low achieving students, who are intrinsically linked to individual need provision. Second, the English special needs department contained special needs teachers, coordinators and support assistants, who were responsible for organising and helping individual students within and outside the classroom. In addition, they underlined the significance of the pastoral care system and school year managers. These teachers' experiences illustrate an extensive system and high level of resources directed towards every individual at school. Compared to the Norwegian policy of collectivism, the English individual focus is heavily emphasised. In other words, these English educational priorities indicate a culture where individual rights are emphasised rather than collectivism, where everyone has to learn the same content in the same classroom. In addition, the English wide-range system and broad approach indicates the importance of *ECM* (DCSF, 2004c) and how schools put effort to implement social and academic networks. This means that a broad system surrounding schools is established and gives teachers more time to

provide for individual needs and to address many, rather than a few demanding and time consuming issues. Additional help through support assistants, special needs assistants, special needs department, special needs coordinators, a pastoral care system and year managers make a difference for the teachers in their provision of individual needs teaching. The priority placed on additional resources indicates Habermas' (1972) explanation of mutual understanding between policy makers and teachers, and further confirms the importance of practitioners being involved to reduce implementation gaps. This should be considered as showing a significant amount of support is provided, that reduces teachers' responsibilities towards students with special needs. A result of this is that teachers have more realistic chances to provide for every individuals' need and help them to further their social and academic development, as the curriculum requires. In this case, the teacher's role is to be a professional teacher rather than an organiser, special need teacher or social worker. This is not only a clarification in terms of teachers' roles but also an acknowledgment of other professions role in school and the contributions they can make to increase social and academic results.

In the case of Norway, the *Opplæringslova* §5-1 (Lovdata, 2008) is of particular interest in terms of special needs provision. This section is clear in the obligations it sets out towards special needs education, but despite this, a total of 10 Norwegian teachers explained they felt there was a lack of support in this case. Taking the Norwegian traditions of encyclopaedism into account, this is not surprising, but a further question should be stated; how can the Norwegian schools fulfil their obligations to special needs provision with limited resources? Two answers appear likely; first, the Norwegian schools could have a very low rate of special need students. This is unlikely because special needs schools represent only 0,34 percent of all schools in Norway (SSB, 2009). The second and more reasonable answer is that Norwegian schools do not fulfil their obligations and fail to meet the legislations in the case of special needs. The data supports this view when Norwegian teachers explain that obligations to special needs students were not fulfilled because of a lack of additional and individual support. If this is so, a common understanding between teachers' needs and policy makers' aims appears to be absent making Habermas's (1972) views, and his theory of communicative action, highly relevant. In this case, the ideas of collectivism and encyclopaedism deny individualistic and differentiated approaches. A lack of systematic and organised special needs departments also leads to new demands on the teachers. Special needs education only makes up a very small part of Norwegian teacher education, and results in a profession which is largely unqualified to teach the variety and diversity of pupils a comprehensive school approach requires. This brings up two important issues; first, if it is possible for a special needs student to receive a quality

education from an unqualified teacher; and second, if the rest of the class is provided for in terms of their individual needs and personal development. Can this situation be called a quality education, based upon equality and individual needs provision? Or is it closer to child preservation?

English Students Learn, Norwegian Teachers Teach.

Both similarities and differences are evident in the data gathered by this study. In spite of this, it is interesting to see these patterns from a higher level. It has been argued that English culture is focused on individualism, while Norwegian culture is focused on collectivism. Taking the practical and cultural aspects described so far into consideration, a conclusion can be made about one national distinction, based on learning process responsibility; *students in England learn, teachers in Norway teach*. The statement needs some clarification: it is not meant to express the idea that only students in England learn and only teachers in Norway teach, but it has an implicit meaning in terms of responsibility for learning processes.

First of all, it has implications for the Norwegian teachers' experiences and interpretations of equality and individual needs provision. The teachers explain an educational practice that is based upon collectivist ideas. The first determining factor in the students learning process is that all students have access to the same school type. The second factor is the political focus on equality, which the teachers interpreted as involving different students with different needs. Taken together these two factors raise some requirements and dilemmas for the teachers. It is particularly interesting to consider the Norwegian teachers' experiences of adjusted teaching, teaching methods diversity and lack of special needs provision and resources. All of these aspects can be connected to the values and traditions of collectivism; the teachers are mainly alone with all students in the classroom. In spite of this, the main task is to teach a diversity of students in a way that is beneficial for all. The data confirms how possibilities for individual need adjustments are limited, but at the same time the teachers' responsibility for the same issue is clear. The absence of special needs teachers and assistants results in a massive task for the teachers; to provide for individual needs amongst a wide spectrum of different needs. The solution to this issue is already politically and culturally pointed out, teaching through adjusted teaching and teaching method diversity. The data indicates that this task is extremely difficult and that the attempt to cover all needs is result in pitching teaching to the average level. The teacher's responsibility is clear; teaching the same content for all in the same classroom (Baune, 2007), which functions as an obstacle in individual need provision. The absence of students' accountability makes it reasonable to believe that an approach like this increases the teachers'

responsibility, but decreases the students' duty towards their own learning processes. This is also indicated by the absence of student responsibility in the Norwegian data. In other words, teachers are seen as the responsible party in the learning process. Teachers teach, rather than students learning. This will be further clarified through comparing the students' role in the English education system.

The English participants explain an educational culture focused on individualism. Ability sets challenge all students at their appropriate level, structured special needs systems cover individual needs and offer wide ranging opportunities, all of these approaches are examples of an individualistic focus. The latter aspect is especially interesting, because offering different opportunities places a requirement on the students which is absent in Norway; the demand they choose and grasp these opportunities. The teachers function is to be a facilitator, or actor as one participant outlined it (5:7), while the students should function as active participants. The students are active learners because they must responsibility for their own learning processes. Specifically, the culture of individualism reduces the teachers' responsibility, but puts new requirements on the students' in terms of accountability. The Norwegian teaching of the same content for all students in the same classroom illustrates the difference of responsibility.

Students in England learn, teachers in Norway teach.

In spite of these differences in learning process and responsibility, one issue should be taken into consideration in both nations; the low achievers. The English participants expressed frustration with the low achievers' ability to grasp the opportunities they are offered. This indicates that the English approach is not beneficial for all. In other words, the low achievers are not able to take the responsibility for their learning processes. A natural solution to this is the use of support assistants and special needs systems. The English teachers acknowledged the additional help, which has the potential to help the low achievers realise their potential, but the teachers' frustrations towards the low achievers indicate that this practice is unsuccessful and needs improvements. The issue of low achievers is also evident in the Norwegian data. In Norway the frustration is directed towards the comprehensive school system and lacks of individual need provision for low achievers. In other words, the teachers are not able to provide the low achievers with teaching that meets their needs. This is exemplified by one participant who considered the comprehensive school as an insult for the low achievers (14:3). This clearly indicates that low achievers are not provided for in terms of their individual needs in the Norwegian system where *teachers teach*, or in the English system where *students learn*.

7.4 Teachers' Toolbox

This section is named “teachers’ toolbox” to illustrate how teachers work as pedagogic carpenters in providing for individual needs. The toolbox represents various pedagogic tools that are discussed in terms of equality and individual need provision. The title of this section is also based upon Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory and his explanation of cultural tools and how they are used in different cultures (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007).

Teaching Methods or Wide-Range Opportunities?

Differences and similarities between English and Norwegian provision for individual needs in a comprehensive school approach appeared in several ways. One of the most obvious differences appeared in the Norwegians’ emphasis on teaching methods as an approach to provide for individual needs. The Norwegian teachers expressed a clear idea about how various methods could be used as a tool to provide for individual needs, and can be understood as an attempt to fulfil the idea of ‘adjusted teaching’. This idea has links to Vygotsky and his explanations of various methods and cultural adjustments to teaching (Wells & Claxton, 2002), but the Norwegian practice of it can also be questioned. Adjusted teaching is defined as common teacher instructions, followed by different exercises at different levels (Skaalvik & Fossen, 1995), but is also related to an absence of individualisation and differentiation (Klette, 2003). In this study, a variety of teaching methods was described as beneficial, because students could use the methods that fitted them best and use this in their learning strategy. Based upon the political focus on collectivism, this approach is neither unexpected, nor completely unproblematic. The approach relies heavily on students’ abilities to understand and discover which methods should be used rather than others, and it is questionable how far lower secondary level students have the cognitive skills, independence and understanding to achieve this, in a positive way. One English teacher explained how she tried to make her low ability class independent, but without success; this indicates a lack of understanding about their own learning processes. The low achievers do not have the commitment and understanding to grasp and make use of the methods offered. This indicates one particularly important consequence; low achievers are not able to learn effectively through an approach based on choice and independence. A tool of teaching method variety requires a high level of understanding and independency amongst students. This benefits those who are able to understand how they learn effectively, but puts further limitations on those who are not able to see their own needs clearly.

It is not surprising that the English participants described a different practice. Taking their different *habitus* into account, this was to be expected. The English participants explain how offering a wide range of activities was used as a tool to provide for individual needs. This was based upon the idea that all students have equal opportunities to grasp and make use of the schools' offerings, and has relevance to Vygotsky's explanation of how learning should be based upon individual skills and background (Wells & Claxton, 2002). This leads to challenges for teachers in the creation of a wide range of activities, at different levels, but also places requirements to the students' to take responsibility for making proper use of them. The student responsibility risks an increased drop out rate, but also has implications for the teacher's role. This can be illustrated through a description of teachers as salesmen and students as buyers. The schools represent a market where the students can grasp or pick the activities that interest them and have opportunities to develop them further. The market approach links to essentialism and individualism, where some people are able to pay more than others. Based upon this, the teacher's role requires them to offer adequate guidance and support to keep students on track and match products and activities according to the student. Furthermore, guiding and support in this way also link to Vygotsky's description of the zone of proximal development (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007). The concept of equal opportunities depends on personal responsibility to make use of what is offered, rather than a passive role as a receiver of curriculum content. Equal opportunities were further provided for through organising schools into ability groups. The idea of the ability groups is not to segregate and separate students from each other according to their skills, but to provide equal possibilities and to provide for students' rights to individual development (Lowe, 2005). An organising approach like this allows for equal possibilities for student to be met with relevant challenges, rather than learning being pitched at the average student. A result of this is that teachers pitch their teaching to *one* ability level rather than a *wide* spectrum of individual students levels. Equal opportunities are offered through various activities according to students' ability levels and needs. Equality is, in other words, provided for by individualising the teaching.

In terms of this issue of teachers' tools, it is interesting how the organising of classes can be used as a tool to provide for individual needs. The comprehensive school approach has links to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory in terms of social and academic diversity (Wells & Claxton, 2002), but creates some natural implications for individual needs provision. Diversity can be too great to handle as a single teacher, in a mixed class, and so some tools to address this must be provided. A natural tool and initiative to take in a situation like this would be to organise students into more homogeneous groups, to reduce the range of needs of individual adjustments

required. The example of Norway was particularly interesting in this regard. Teachers explained that they saw organising by ability groups as a beneficial tool in terms of individual needs, but were denied use of this tool by national legislations such as *Opplæringslova* (Lovdata, 2008). Meanwhile the English education policy put effort into individualisation, the Norwegian *Opplæringslova* §8-2 (Lovdata, 2008) represents the opposite to a denial of ability group organising, for a lasting period. The definition of a lasting period is in itself problematic, but the limited possibilities for grouping were, according to the data, an obstacle in the Norwegian individual needs provision. The legislations pull one way, and requirements of individual needs provision pull in another, creating a huge dilemma for the teachers. The Norwegian teachers are forced to violate one of two legislations; first *Opplæringslova* §8-2 (Lovdata, 2008) in grouping students, or second, the students' rights to individual need provision in a regular mixed class. It is also worth underlining that one of the Norwegian schools was organised according to ability levels, for a fixed period only, was and had been forced to do this because of space limitations in a renovating period. The remarkable part of this is that even though the teachers had the opportunity to organise the age groups in mixed ability groups, they chose regular ability groups. The interesting question is of why this priority was chosen. The answer can be seen in the data: it increased possibilities to provide for individual needs. The teachers expressed their happiness to be teaching a homogeneous and small group, because they were able to meet the students' needs to a much higher degree than in a mixed ability group. This tool of organising was claimed to be an advantage for both students and teachers, and to represent how organising can be used as a tool in individual needs provision. An approach like this is very close to the English style of organising of three ability levels, but which removes the responsibility of the categorisation from teachers themselves. The English teachers were allocated classes of different ability levels to teach from the first day, while the Norwegian teachers were allocated a class which had to be reorganised several times to fulfil that aim *Opplæringslova* (Lovdata, 2008) and at the same time provides for individual needs. This means that the teachers had cross-national similarities in their organising preferences, but that practice was driven by the *habitus* they operated in.

The Working Plan

Another example of individual need provision in Norwegian schools was the use of the working plan as a pedagogic tool. The Norwegian use of the working plan has relevance in terms of what Vygotsky calls compensatory strategies to provide for individual needs in a diverse class (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007). A working plan in a Norwegian context is described as a written document containing three ability levels with certain activities and homework within a certain

period. The idea of ability levels is good in that it comes closer to each individual, but can be questioned if it is not followed up at school and in teaching. Compensatory strategies usually appear because other approaches do not work as intended, and the aims have to be addressed in other ways. It can, therefore, be asked if the working plan is being used because it provides for individual needs in an effective and qualitatively good way, or if it is a compensatory strategy because of a lack of other pedagogical strategies. The working plan would have been a good pedagogic tool if it was followed up in daily teaching, but participants' frustrations about the lack of individual need provision indicates that this is not happening. The English participants did not bring up any working plans being as a tool to provide for individual needs. In this regard, the English priorities were directed to teaching ability groups and through additional staff, rather than unfulfilled theoretical plans represented by the Norwegian working plan.

Resources

Another interesting perspective was that the English teachers appreciated the additional resources they were given as tools to provide for individual needs. Additional resources were not only important to support teaching of students' with special needs or difficulties, but also to lighten teachers' responsibilities for those same students. Additional resources further released teacher time to provide good quality teaching and meet individual needs amongst the rest of the class. Special needs departments, special needs coordinators, special needs assistants, year managers, pastoral care systems and supportive staff were all seen as a positive factor to increase those opportunities. One example is that when support assistants are attached to individual students, which can result in increased student knowledge and development of the zone of proximal development. Additional resources are usually available in classrooms which have a high degree of diversity (Barrow, 2008), but in terms of human resources, this was much less evident in the Norwegian schools. The national differences in human resources appeared to be huge. This difference in resources affected not only the students with special needs, but also teachers' ability to provide the rest of the class with a quality education. This brings up the question of student diversity, how wide a range of diversity it is realistic to expect teachers to handle and how much resources are needed to give equal opportunities and allow them to succeed? The answer to this is of course complex, but utopian ideas about teachers as superhumans who can that teach a wide range of abilities despite high teacher-student ratios and an absence of additional support is naive. In other words, a total policy of inclusion can be detrimental to all unless it is fully supported in the classroom. Another issue following from this is the teachers' dilemma that emerges when they realise that individual need provision for all is impossible. What consequences are likely to follow from a situation like that? The

answer, of course, is not simple but one natural result would be that this creates an enormous workload in the attempt to meet as many needs as possible. The opposite approach is to deny the priorities of individual need provision and pitch the teaching towards average students. Neither of these outcomes are preferable, but according to the data, situations like this do appear. The Norwegian schools lack of resources and systematic special needs provision appears to be vulnerable to a scenario like this.

It would be interesting to know what the pedagogic arguments for a high teacher-student ratio are, rather than adding in extra resources. Is it really reasonable to expect that a teacher should provide for individual needs for 25-30 students with a minimum of additional support, or is it a question of political misunderstanding and what Habermas (1972) explains as common breakdown in understanding between teachers and policy makers? It should be obvious for teachers, parents, managers, policy makers and others involved in schooling that individual needs can never be met without reasonable organising and resources. The teacher-student ratio is an example of how the degree of mismatch between aims and needs determines the size of the resulting implementation gap. The English and Norwegian schools have approached the solution to this in two different ways. The English schools have valued ability organising, additional staff and other professions as beneficial to learning, while the Norwegian system sticks to the belief that equal opportunities means that students have to sit in the same classroom rather than receive individualised teaching. This is linked to encyclopaedism and essentialism, but does also seem to be linked to Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (Moore, 2004). The Norwegian Midtlyngutvalget⁶ is an example of this when they suggested replacing special needs education with extra adjusted teaching in the regular teaching (KD, 2009). The reference to adjusted teaching priority is further confirmed through cultural roots in what Eriksen (1993) describes as "The law of Jante" [*Janteloven*], where the struggle to make everyone as "normal" as possible dominates. In addition, the development of a Welfare state and social-democratic society is positive in terms of access to education, but also an obstacle in what Telhaug (2008) refers to as Norwegian national aims and values that are seen as more important than individual development. The Norwegian school system is willing to abandon the students' rights to individual development and create an ideal where originality and high qualifications are undermined. English society tends to work in the opposite direction, in the acknowledgement of educational individualisation and smaller implementation gaps, but the English focus on

6 Midtlyngutvalget delivered a report to the Ministry of Education to suggest wide-ranging initiatives for help and support to children, youths and adults with special needs in learning. This resulted in NOU 2009:18, named *Rett til Læring* [Right to Learning].

individualism is not unquestionable. Individualism and personalised learning can definitely have positive effects, but a problem appears when children are categorised at an early level. In this regard, it is relevant to ask who decides on a child's level. The answer is the teachers do, who are given a lot of power to decide a small child's future, but what happens if a child is put in a low ability group from their first year of schooling? Will this child ever be offered the knowledge required to pass the standardised tests, and have the opportunities to be a high achiever later in life? The consequence of grouping students too early or wrongly is clear; the childrens' future and opportunities to development are limited already from an early age.

Teacher-Student Familiarity

The Norwegian and English teachers agreed to a high degree in one area in particular; the value of teacher-student familiarity. This perspective has links to Vygotsky and his emphasis on development through background knowledge of the students (Wells & Claxton, 2002). Teacher-student familiarity was presented as a tool to provide for individual needs because students' socio-economic background was considered to be a crucial factor in learning and development. Teacher-student familiarity is not only about school related knowledge, but also a deeper understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses, aspirations and motivations. These are all factors that influence behaviours inside and outside of the classroom and affect teachers' approach and planning for teaching. In this case, it is interesting that the Norwegian teachers aimed to "see" their students, while the English approach was more about formal assessments. Again a link to cultural aspects is relevant: Norwegian collectivism results in a culture with an absence of formal assessments that highlights student differences, while English individualism leads to assessments that is used to categorise and qualify students for different academic levels.

Another issue in teacher-student familiarity is the size and range of the student group. It is logical that a wide range of needs create a more complex picture, which again makes it natural to believe that homogeneous and small groups lead to more detailed student knowledge being possible. The English teachers have better opportunities to develop satisfactory teacher-student familiarity than their Norwegian colleagues, in respect to a wide range of students. A consequence of poor teacher-student familiarity is that teaching is pitched to the average level in the hope of catching as many students as possible, rather than providing a quality education for all.

7.5 Socio-Economic Background

The teachers considered social background to be a vital factor in provision of students' individual needs and further personal development. The socio-economic background was described as a determinant factor in the learning process and students' needs. Students come to school with different academic and social competences, motivations and aspirations that all affect teachers' abilities to meet their needs. Their needs and preferences are based on parents' financial, social and cultural positions, and have a strong relevance to the issue of equality and *field*.

Equal Opportunities?

First of all, the issue of how socio-economic background and social class determines access to schooling and educational opportunities is discussed for the schools in England. This study is based upon comprehensive schools, but in spite of this, the English participants underlined the variety of schools as a significant factor in terms of inequality. The Norwegian parents have another situation, where there are few choices except public comprehensive schools. In terms of equality, the English political idea of parental choice makes educational priorities for their children a factor in school intake. Wealthy parents chose schools with a high reputation for their children so they are provided with the best opportunities to succeed (Pring, 2008). In other words, these parents are related to a *field* that gives them opportunities others do not have. This is exemplified through poor parents who are not able to pay school fees and other costs, which forces their children into public schools with lower reputations. The way in which the wealthiest parents increase their opportunities and results is also related to Bourdieu and Passeron's (2000) description of education as social reproduction. Those with best results get the most influential jobs and have the power to shape future policies and reproduce their own culture. This means that the middle class *fields* have the power to reproduce their social and cultural positions.

The Norwegian education system involves a very different approach, through a radical comprehensive school system with approximately 98 percent of public schools (SSB, 2009). It is reasonable to believe that a system like this provides equal opportunities for all and that social and cultural reproduction should vanish, but the fact is that Oslo is divided into distinct areas which vary from low to high socio-economic backgrounds (SSB, 2008). Parents with high income have the opportunities to settle in areas with more expensive accommodation, while low-income parents settle in low-income areas. This means that Norwegian participants do not

mention social class, but the aspect of *field* is still evident. When the children attend their local schools, they are already geographically distributed according to their financial capital, and have levels of cultural and social capital that are different in lower socio-economic areas. Socio-economic background is therefore an important issue for cultural and social reproduction. The Norwegian children have equal opportunities to attend a public school, but have different conditions and future opportunities because the cluster of high or low socio-economic background amongst families in their area. In other words, in spite of equal school access, people are still organised according to socio-economic background. This makes socio-economic background and *field* relevant in Norway as well as England.

Parents' Influence

The second issue is how parents influence provision for their children's individual needs. The first issue was related to the political level, while the second issue of socio-economic background is related to parents' influence at the local and individual level. Vygotsky underlines social and cultural aspects influence humans (Cole & Gajdamascho, 2007; Daniels, 2001) and further that people develop differently and have different needs (Kozulin & Gindis, 2007). The participants confirmed that children start school with different needs and a determined set of opportunities, based on their cultural and social experiences. In other words, the parents have already influenced their children's development. In this concern, collaboration between parents and teachers has the potential to increase what Habermas (1972) describes as a mutual understanding. Parents' aspirations and ambitions for their children place expectations onto the children, but also expectations onto the teachers. This creates a competition situation for resources, represented by different *fields* (Crossley, 2005). Parents with most valuable *fields* have best opportunities to communicate, inform and influence in the response to their children's needs. This is particularly relevant because teachers have to know about student issues to respond to their individual needs; teachers have to know about a student's background to grasp the whole picture of needs and requirements. Where teachers spend a limited amount of time with their students every day, their influence to students' development is limited, in spite of providing for individual needs. In this concern, parent-teacher collaboration has the potential to increase influence and it is natural to ask which parents make most use of this opportunity. Once again, Bourdieu is right when he and Passeron (2000) explain that social and cultural reproduction takes place in school. Parents with the highest ambitions, interest and belief in education make higher demands on the schools and teachers, which further influence how their children's needs are catered for. Furthermore, their children learn how to make use of the system, which reproduces their position (Robbins, 2000).

7.6 Conclusions

This section contains the concluding remarks for this study and contains five sections; a summary of the thesis (7.6.1); limitations (7.6.2); impact on research and policy (7.6.3); further research (7.6.4); and, the conclusion (7.6.5).

7.6.1 Summary

This study has investigated differences and similarities between English and Norwegian education policy, practice and culture. This was done through a literature review representing both countries and which focused upon historical, political and cultural perspectives. A qualitative study was carried out with a focus on teachers' experiences and interpretations of equality and individual need provision in comprehensive schools. In addition, chapter five, *cultural background*, was created to understand education from the cultural context, but also as a contribution to the empirical data. The aim of conducting an in-depth investigation of teachers' perspectives was fulfilled through narrative, semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in low and high socio-economic areas in both Bradford and Oslo, while random sampling characterised the further selection of four lower secondary comprehensive schools and 19 teachers. The analysis process was based upon grounded theory that was adapted to the limitations of this study. The coding process, conceptualisation and categorisation were significant parts of the analysis.

The investigation is also based upon three writers within the social science, Jürgen Habermas, Lev Vygotsky and Pierre Bourdieu. Habermas' theory of communication and mutual understanding is used to focus upon teachers' voice in policymaking and to further an understanding of implementation gap reductions. The socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky focuses upon humans as social and cultural products, which therefore influences and determines different individual needs. His explanations of cultural tools are also of special interest. Bourdieu creates a focus on culture as a determining factor in educational opportunities: how the world is viewed and experienced differently according to the concepts of *habitus* and *field*. The results of this study are discussed based upon the framework and criteria as described above and are further summarised in this section. Teachers' perspectives, political differences and similarities and cultural influences on equality and individual need provision are the main aspects discussed.

The question of equality is emphasised in the English and Norwegian curricula, but was experienced differently in practice. It was a common understanding that equality involved school access, but was also a question of equal opportunities and being treated differently. Neither English nor Norwegian teachers experienced a sense they had fulfilled these aims and instead implementation gaps are evident. Inequality in England is related to school access, while Norwegian inequality appears within the schools. In other words, the issue of parental choice and school diversity creates inequality in England, while a lack of individual need provision within the schools was more of an issue in Norway. Socio-economic background is considered to be an influential factor in both countries, with special interest in England where social class determines choice of schools. A cross-national understanding about provision for individual needs was found, where it was seen to be dependent on teacher-student familiarity on personal and academic levels.

Implementation gaps were not only an issue in terms of equality, but were also evident in the practical provision for individual needs. The English focus upon individual development is fulfilled to a high degree, but the mismatch between Norwegian policy and practice in individual need provision is significant. First of all, mixed ability organising is legislated for in *Opplæringslova* (Lovdata, 2008). Second, the issue of student diversity is not taken seriously into consideration when teachers are alone with all students, most of the time that they teach. Norwegian policy makers have not taken into consideration the necessary human and financial resources required to meet their vision. The English system of funding represents an alternative solution which makes increased pedagogic activity possible. This is not only evident in regular teaching, but is even more evident in the issue of special needs. The English teachers acknowledged the importance of a special needs structure, while a structured and organised special needs department and human resources are missing in Norway. Taking their different *habitus* and curriculum traditions into consideration, this is not surprising. The cultural differences between collectivism and individualism are exemplified by the English approach of ability groups on one side, and the Norwegian legislation for mixed ability classes on the other. In this regard, it is also interesting that political priorities about equality and individual needs have led to different practices. The examples illustrate how policy, culture and practice influence each other.

It is further relevant to ask what can be learned from this study. Many issues can be brought up, but the main issues are as follow:-

- Culture and practice are highly relevance when it comes to reducing implementation gaps and should be included in policy making.
- Equality is not only about school access, but also equal opportunities for all *within* the schools.
- Individual need provision in a comprehensive school approach requires a high degree of human resources.
- Equality and individual need provision can be improved through organising and use of other professions as well as special needs teachers and support assistants.
- Time and class size are significant factors in the provision for individual need and equality.
- Socio-economic background is reproduced through the education system and determines students' future possibilities.

7.6.2 Limitations

Comparability

The field of comparative and international education requires careful consideration of the issue of comparability. The nature of comparative research leads to implications for culture and context and has to be carried out as through context-sensitive investigations (Crossley & Watson, 2003). This study is no exception and put limitations on the comparability of the investigation. History, policy and culture differ between England and Norway and make direct comparisons impossible. An understanding of these factors is significant to interpret and understand the national context properly. These aspects are therefore taken into consideration in this study.

Language

Another limitation in this study is the issue of language. The interviews were conducted accorded to the country language: English was used in England and Norwegian in Norway. Some concepts have the same meaning in both nations, while some English concepts needed additional explanation to be put into the Norwegian context. Clarifications of concepts were taken into consideration before conducting the interviews and this further contributed to the ease of translations. In spite of this language issue, the participants in both countries answered reasonable and narrative to the questions.

Time

The interviews were conducted between lectures and meetings and this led to some time limitations. All interviews were planned to last approximately 30 minutes, but had duration between 25-60 minutes. The core questions were asked to all participants, while some small questions were left out when lack of time arose.

7.6.3 Impact on Research and Policy

The links between educational theory and practice have significant value in the aim of improving education (Hahn, 2006; Potts, 2006) and putting more focus on practitioners' perspectives. Teachers' perspectives of equality and individual need provision are rarely represented in the literature and a literature gap is evident. This study has been a contribution to decrease that gap and to give the teachers a voice within education. The practitioners' views are also important to reveal strengths and weaknesses (Goodson, 2008) and to improve educational policies (Bray, 2007). The investigations in this study have been focused on those aims.

Weaknesses and strengths within the English and Norwegian education have been revealed and this makes a contribution to reduce implementation gaps in terms of equality and individual needs provision within a comprehensive school approach.

Furthermore, it is relevant to question how the results of this study can be used at a political level. First of all, the participants' experiences of socio-economic background as a determining factor should be accounted for in policymaking. These experiences illustrate that issues of equality and individual need provision are dependent on other factors beyond education. A natural consequence of this is to create a distinction between social and educational policies. That education has been used to serve social policies was made clear in chapter five, but this is also criticised as an ineffective use of resources (Jonsson, 1999). Policies directed towards equality and individual needs provision need broader approaches that cross department sectors such as family, finance and health services. As Lingard (2009) states, a change is needed where education does not function as the garbage bin for social issues. In this concern, it is interesting that English politicians have renewed the broader approach taken through the *ECM* (DCSF, 2004c) programme. *ECM* illustrates a political initiative to improve the situation for students by challenging families to achieve their goals in life (QCDA, 2007f). It should not be expected that the programme alone can decrease the English social class issue, but this exemplifies how inequality is linked to social policies. Another situation is evident in Norway. The issue of school access at 98 percent (SSB, 2009) and absence of distinct social class issues in the

Norwegian data indicate a high degree of equality, but in contrast to England, the individual need provision within the schools is lacking. In other words, a high degree of school access does not necessarily lead to high degree of individual needs provision.

In spite of the need for a broader political approach, a focus on education policies alone is also necessary. A significant issue in this study is how to increase equality and improve individual needs provision. The participants interpreted equality as involving different students with different needs, showing that the two concepts are highly related to each other. This means that policies should be directed towards both aspects, and suggests it is natural to outline the teachers' perspectives to reduce implementation gaps. First of all, the policies should be directed towards teacher freedom and flexibility in organising and resources. The participants underlined the significance of assessments and teacher-student familiarity to provide for individual needs, and stands by this as key factors to locate individual needs increase equality. A belief that teachers can handle this themselves is a utopian idea; flexibility in use of tools and additional resources are necessary. This is in through factors such as time, reduced class size, support assistants, flexibility in organising and structured special needs departments or systems. The latter approach also leads to the use of other professions beyond teachers in education. These and other factors are underlined in the Norwegian governmental initiative on investigating teachers' need for time. In December 2009, the report from *Tidsbrukutvalget* (2009) was delivered the Norwegian minister of education. Aspects such as leadership, time efficiency, decreased documentation and use of other professions were underlined as ways to increase effectiveness, but factors such as special needs departments, alternative organising or reduced class sizes were surprisingly not mentioned. Furthermore, the contemporary Norwegian education system is considered to be out of date (Engelsen, 2003). In this regard, the Norwegian participants expressed frustration of the wide spectrum of diversity in the classrooms. This indicates that contemporary policies do not reflect the practical reality and this makes a change of focus necessary. In other words, the focus should be on pluralism and individuals rather than strict collectivism.

7.6.4 Further Research

This study has focused upon teachers' perspectives of equality and individual needs in England and Norway, while differences and similarities in policy and culture have also been investigated. The investigation has been based upon the requirements of this study and time limits have restricted investigations. In spite of this, several interesting considerations raised by the study

can be taken forward. A natural next approach would be to investigate teachers' perspectives on equality and individual need provision from a deductive approach. Themes and issues from this study would be investigated in a larger scale study, to increase the understanding about equality and individual need provision. Quantitative studies lead to a loss of details, but on the other hand cover a wider range of participants and show clearer variations (Bryman, 2008). Taking this into consideration, a representative sample would make a contribution to generalisation and representativeness of outcomes (Bryman, 2008).

Another approach could focus on specific issues derived from this study. This study has revealed similarities and differences that need a deeper investigation to be completely understood. Examples of relevant issues would include: understanding views on teacher/student responsibility and teachers' tools, resources, organising and assessments. A natural approach to increase the in-depth understanding of these issues would be qualitative approaches. An investigation of teachers' perspectives has a high relevance, but investigations from other angles would result in a broader understanding of the issues. An investigation of senior managers' perspectives would increase understanding about priorities and initiatives in individual schools, while students' perspectives would also contribute to understanding how the individual need provision is received. Furthermore, investigations of policy makers' perspectives would be interesting to understand backgrounds and arguments for national visions, aims and initiatives.

7.6.5 Conclusion

This study has investigated teachers' perspectives on equality and individual need provision. In addition, cultural aspects are investigated to understand education from the English and Norwegian contexts. In chapter one, *introduction*, it was assumed that Norwegian lower secondary schools are directed towards social rather than academic aims, while the opposite was expected to be found in England. Taking the English tradition of individualism and Norwegian tradition of collectivism into consideration, these assumptions are confirmed to a certain degree, but the situation is of course more complex. In the following section, points from the data are highlighted that provide results relevant in education debates and policymaking.

In 1994, UNESCO formalised The Salamanca Statement with 92 governments and 25 international organisations. Two issues of this agreement have particular relevance for this study; education for all; and students' differences being celebrated within education. Issues derived from this study are acknowledged as priorities across the world as well as England and

Norway. The English focus on individualism resulted in an education with a focus on individual need provision and student differences, but is also characterised by inequality in school access. The Norwegian situation was different with a high degree of collectivism and equal access, but poor individual need provision within the schools and low focus on student differences. A question following from this would be to what degree it is possible to find a balance between the two systems. In this concern, the main requirement for educational equality is that all students have equal access to schooling. Policies should therefore not be directed towards provision of the *same* education for all, but equal *opportunities* to develop socially and academically. Furthermore, equal opportunities to development have to be provided *within* the schools as well as through *access*. The possibilities for providing individual need provision remain a central issue in this concern. The ability to achieve this satisfactorily varied in England and Norway, but some common issues were underlined as significant; time, class size, class organising, special needs organising and human resources. In other words, these factors found across countries and cultures and are significant in the possibility of achieving equality and individual need provision in future policymaking.

Another cross-national aspect that influences equality and individual need provision is the issue of socio-economic background. Students from various families are different and therefore have different needs. This makes education an excellent way to celebrate differences. The differences are celebrated through English individualism, while Norwegian collectivism aims at utility and likeness. As stated above, neither England nor Norway provides equality or meets individual needs to a level that is satisfactory. None of the systems are able to combine differences with equality and individual need provision. This study has not aimed to solve this complicated issue, but the focus on teachers' perspectives has contributed and revealed issues for improving equality and individual need provision. Teachers' perspectives offer potential ways to improve educational policies for equality and individual need provision.

8 References

Adey, Philip., Hewitt, Gwen., Hewitt, John., and Landau, Nicolette. (2004). *The professional development of teachers: Practice and theory*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic.

Alexander, Robin. (1999). Comparing classrooms and schools. In Robin Alexander, Patricia Broadfoot and David Phillips (Eds.), *Learning from comparing: New directions in comparative educational research, Volume 1, Contexts, classrooms and outcomes* (pp.109-111). Oxford, England: Symposium Books.

Alexander, Robin. (2008). *Essays on pedagogy*. London: Routledge.

Bachmann, Kari and Haug, Peder. (2006). *Forskning om tilpasset opplæring*. (Forskningsrapport Nr. 62). Norway, Høgskulen i Volda & Møreforskning Volda.

Ball, Stephen J. (2006). *Education policy and social class: The selected works of Stephen J. Ball*. London: Routledge.

Ball, Stephen J. (2008). *The education debate*. Bristol, England: The Policy Press.

Barrow, Robin. (2008). Common schooling and the need for distinction. In Mark Halstead and Graham Haydon (Eds.), *The common school and the comprehensive ideal: A defence by Richard Pring with complementary essays* (pp. 57-71). Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell.

Baune, Tove Aarsnes. (2007). *Den skal tidlig krøkes.... Skolen i historisk perspektiv*. Oslo, Norway: Cappelen Forlag.

Bech, Christian W. (2000). *Kodenavn skole: Kampen om norsk utdannings fremtid*. Vallset, Norway: Oplandske Bokforlag.

Bernstein, George L. (2004). *The myth of decline: The rise of Britain since 1945*. London: Pimlico.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Passeron, Jean-Claude. (2000). *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Bradford metropolitan district council. (2009a). *People and organisation*. Retrieved May, 9th, 2009, from http://www.bradford.gov.uk/bmdc/people_and_organisations/people/population.htm

Bradford metropolitan district council. (2009b). *Leisure and culture*. Retrieved May, 9th, 2009, from http://www.bradford.gov.uk/bmdc/leisure_and_culture/

Bradford metropolitan district council. (2009c). *Heritage*. Retrieved May, 9th, 2009, from http://www.bradford.gov.uk/bmdc/leisure_and_culture/culture_and_creativity/heritage.htm

Bradford metropolitan district council. (2009d). *Government, politics and public administration*. Retrieved May, 9th, 2009, from http://www.bradford.gov.uk/bmdc/government_politics_and_public_administration/policy_making/equality/

Bray, Mark. (2007). Actors and purposes in comparative education. In Mark Bray, Bob Adamson and Mark Mason (Eds.), *Comparative and international research: Approaches and*

methods, Volume 19, CERC studies in comparative education (pp. 15-38). Comparative education research centre, Hong Kong: Springer.

Brighouse, Harry. (2008). Educational justice and socio-economic segregation in schools. In Mark Halstead and Graham Haydon (Eds.), *The common school and the comprehensive ideal: A defence by Richard Pring with complementary essays* (pp. 72-87). Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell.

Broadfoot, Patricia. (1999). Not so much a context, more a way of life?: Comparative education in the 1990s. In Robin Alexander, Patricia Broadfoot and David Phillips (Eds.), *Learning from comparing: New directions in comparative educational research, Volume 1, Contexts, classrooms and outcomes* (pp. 21-32). Oxford, England: Symposium Books.

Broadfoot, Patricia., Osborn, Marylin., Sharpe, Keith., and Planel, Claire. (2000). *Promoting quality in learning: Does England have the answer?*. London: Continuum International.

Brock, Colin and Alexiadou, Nafsika. (2008). England. In Wolfgang Hörner, Hans Döbert, Botho von Kopp and Wolfgang Mitter, *The education systems of Europe*, Dordrecht. The Netherlands: Springer.

Bryman, Alan. (2008). *Social research methods* (3rd ed.). England: Oxford University Press.

Budge, Ian., Crewe, Ivor., McKay, David., and Newton, Ken. (2001). *The new British politics* (2nd ed.). London: Longman.

Burrell, Gibson and Morgan, Gareth. (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis: Elements of the sociology of corporate life*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Campbell, R.J., Robinson, W., Neelands, J., Hewston, R., and Mazzoli, L. (2007). 'Personalised learning: Ambiguities in theory and practice'. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, **55** (2), 135-154.

Capel, Susan., Leask, Marilyn., and Turner, Tony. (2005). *Learning to teach in the secondary school: A companion to school experience* (4th ed.). London: Routledge.

Chitty, Clyde. (2001). Selection by specialisation. In Clyde Chitty and Brian Simon (Eds.), *Promoting comprehensive education in the 21st century* (pp. 19-25). Staffordshire, England: Trentham Books.

Cole, Michael and Gajdamaschko, Natalia. (2007). Vygotsky and culture. In Harry Daniels, Michael Cole and James V. Wertsch (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Vygotsky* (pp. 193-211). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Courcier, Ikumi. (2007). 'Teachers' perceptions of personalised learning'. *Evaluation & Research in Education*, **20** (2), 59-80.

Crossley, Michael and Watson, Keith . (2003). *Comparative and international research in education: Globalisation, context and difference*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Crossley, Nick. (2005). *Key concepts in critical social theory*. London: Sage.

Cummings, William K. (2003). *The institutions of education: a comparative study of educational development in the six core nations*. Oxford, England: Symposium Books.

Dainton, Sheila. (2004). 'Personalised learning'. *FORUM*, **46** (2), 56-58.

Dale, Erling Lars. (2008a). *Fellesskolen – reproduksjon av sosial ulikhet*. Oslo, Norway: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag.

Dale, Erling Lars. (2008b). *Fellesskolen – skolefaglig læring for alle*. Oslo, Norway: Cappelen Akademisk Forlag.

Dale, Lars Erling., Lindvig, Yngve., and Wærness, Jarl Inge. (2005). *Tilpasset og differensiert opplæring i lys av Kunnskapsløftet*. Drammen, Norway: Læringslaben.

Dale, Erling Lars and Wærness, Jarl Inge. (2003). *Differensiering og tilpasning i grunnopplæringen: Rom for alle – blikk for den enkelte*. Oslo, Norway: Cappelen Akademiske Forlag.

Daniels, Harry. (2001). *Vygotsky and pedagogy*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Daniels, Harry. (2008). Reflections on points of departure in the development of sociocultural and activity theory. In Bert van Oers, Wim Wardekker, Ed Elbers and René van der Veer (Eds.), *The transformation of learning: Advances in cultural-historical activity theory* (pp. 58-75). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Davison, Jon. (2004). Education, culture and social class. In Dennis Hayes (Ed.), *The RoutledgeFalmer guide to key debates in education* (pp. 81-86). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Day, Christopher., Sammons, Pam., Stobart, Gordon., Kington, Alison., and Gu, Qing. (2007). *Teachers matter: Connecting lives, work and effectiveness*. Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.

DCSF. (2004a). *Free school meals*. Retrieved April, 16th, 2009, from http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/foischeme/subPage.cfm?action=collections.displayDocument&i_documentID=117&i_collectionID=157

DCSF. (2004b). *Every child matters*. Retrieved March, 12th, 2009, from <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/>

DCSF. (2004c). *Every child matters: Aims and outcomes*. Retrieved March, 12th, 2009, from <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/aims/aims/>

DCSF. (2004d). *Background to Every child matters*. Retrieved March 12th, 2009, from <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/background/background/>

DfES. (2001). *Schools: Achieving success*. Nottinghamshire, England: Author.

DfES. (2004). *The National Curriculum. Handbook for secondary teachers in England*. Nottinghamshire, England: Author.

DfES. (2005). *Higher standards, better schools for all*. Nottinghamshire, England: Author.

Dunford, Michael. (1998). Economies in space and time: economic geographies of development and underdevelopment and historical geographies of modernization. In Brian Graham (Ed.), *Modern Europe: Place, culture and identity* (pp. 53-88). London: Arnold.

Edgar, Andrew. (2005). *The philosophy of Habermas: A comprehensive introduction to the thought of Jürgen Habermas*. London: Acumen.

Edgar, Andrew. (2006). *Habermas: The key concepts*. New York: Routledge.

Edgar, Andrew and Sedgewick, Peter. (2002). *Cultural theory: The key thinkers*. London: Routledge.

Ellis, Brian. (2002). *The philosophy of nature: A guide to the new essentialism*. Chesham, England: Acumen.

Engelsen, Britt Ulstrup. (2003). *Ideer som formet vår skole?: Læreplanen som idébærer - et historisk perspektiv*. Oslo, Norway: Gyldendal Akademisk Forlag.

Erben, Michael and Dickinson, Hilary. (2004). Basil Bernstein: Social divisions and cultural transmission. In Mark Olssen (Ed.), *Culture and learning: Access and opportunity in the classroom* (pp. 117-136). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. (1993). Being Norwegian in a shrinking world: Reflections on Norwegian identity. In Anne Cohen Kiel (Ed.), *Continuity and change: Aspects of contemporary Norway* (pp. 11-38). Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

EU. (n.d.). *Member states of the EU: United Kingdom*. Retrieved March, 20th, 2010, from http://europa.eu/abc/european_countries/eu_members/unitedkingdom/index_en.htm

Evans, Norman. (2005). *Curriculum change in secondary schools, 1957-2004: An educational roundabout?*. London: Routledge.

Farrell, Michael. (2003). *Understanding special educational needs: A guide for student teachers*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Farrell, Peter and Ainscow, Mel. (2002). Making special education inclusive: mapping the issues. In Peter Farrell and Mel Ainscow (Eds.), *Making special education inclusive: From research to practice* (pp. 1-12). London: David Fulton.

Field, John. (2008). *Social capital* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Free Index. (2009). *Bradford business directory UK*. Retrieved May, 9th, 2009, from <http://www.freeindex.co.uk/yorkshire/bradford/bradford/>

Fuchs, Stephan. (2001). *Against essentialism: A theory of culture and society*. Cambridge, England: Harvard University Press.

García, Ana Rivero and Ariza, Rafael Porlán. (2005). Areas of professional research: A proposal for organising the content of teacher education. In Pam M. Denicolo and Michael Kompf (Eds.), *Connecting policy and practice: Challenges for teaching and learning in schools and universities* (pp. 31-38). New York: Routledge.

Garrett, Paul Michael. (2009). Pierre Bourdieu. In Mel Gray and Stephen A. Webb (Eds.), *Social work theories and methods* (pp. 33-42). London: Sage.

Gewirtz, Sharon and Cribb, Alan. (2009). *Understanding education: A sociological perspective*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Gewirtz, Sharon., Mahony, Pat., Hextall, Ian., and Cribb, Alan. (2009). Policy, professionalism and practice: understanding and enhancing teachers' work. In Sharon Gewirtz, Pat Mahony, Ian Hextall and Alan Cribb (Eds.), *Changing teacher professionalism: International trends, challenges and ways forward* (pp. 3-16). New York: Routledge.

Giddens, Anthony. (2000). *The third way and its critics*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Gillham, Bill. (2000). *The Research Interview*. London: Continuum.

Gleeson, Denis., Davies, Jennie., and Wheeler, Eunice. (2009). On the making and taking of professionalism in the further education workplace. In Sharon Gewirtz, Pat Mahony, Ian Hextall and Alan Cribb (Eds.), *Changing teacher professionalism: International trends, challenges and ways forward* (pp. 117-130). New York: Routledge.

Goldstein, Harvey. (2004). 'International comparison of student attainment: Some issues arising from the PISA study'. *Assessment in Education*, **11** (3), 319-330.

Goodson, Ivor. (2008). *Investigating the teachers' life and work*. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense.

Gray, John. (2001). The fate of comprehensive schools in England during the 1990s. In Achim Leschinsky and Karl Ulrich Mayer (Eds.), *The comprehensive school experiment revisited: Evidence from Western Europe* (pp. 131-147) (2nd ed.). Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang.

Guba, Egon G. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 191-216) (3rd ed.). London: Sage.

Gundem, Bjørg Brandtzæg. (2008). *Perspektiv på læreplanen*. Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget.

Gundem, Bjørg Brandtzæg., Karseth, Berit., and Sivesind, Kirsten. (2003). Curriculum theory and research in Norway: Traditions, trends, and challenges. In William F. Pinar (Ed.), *International handbook of curriculum research*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Habermas, Jürgen. (1972). *Knowledge and human interest*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Hagger, Hazel and McIntyre, Donald. (2006). *Learning teaching from teachers: Realizing the potential of school-based teacher education*. Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.

Hahn, Carole L. (2006). Comparative and international social studies research. In Keith C. Barton (Ed.), *Research methods in social studies education: Contemporary issues and perspectives* (pp. 139-157). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

- Halsey, A.H. (2006). Sociology and the debate. In David Phillips and Geoffrey Walford (Eds.), *Tracing education policy: Selections from the Oxford review of education* (pp. 20-38). London: Routledge.
- Hardill, Irene., Graham, David T., and Kofman, Eleonore. (2001). *Human geography of the UK: An introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Hartley, David. (2007). 'Personalisation: The emerging 'revised' code of education?'. *Oxford Review of Education*, **33** (5), 629-642.
- Hartley, David. (2009). 'Personalisation: The nostalgic revival of child-centred education?'. *Journal of Education Policy*, **24** (4), 423-434.
- Haug, Peder. (2004). 'Om tilpassa oppl ring - en analyse av tilstanden i grunnskolen'. *Skolepsykologi*, **4**, 3-21.
- Haug, Peder and Bachmann, Kari. (2007). Mangfold, individ og fellesskap. In Jorunn M ller and Liv Sundli (Eds.), *L ringsplakaten: Skolens samfunnskontrakt*. Kristiansand, Norway: H yskoleforlaget.
- Haydon, Graham. (2008). In search of the comprehensive ideal: By way of an introduction. In Mark Halstead and Graham Haydon (Eds.), *The common school and the comprehensive ideal: A defence by Richard Pring with complementary essays* (pp. 23-37). Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell.

Heath, Anthony and Jacobs, Sheila. (1999). Comprehensive reform in Britain. In Achim Leschinsky and Karl Ulrich Mayer (Eds.), *The comprehensive school experiment revisited: Evidence from Western Europe* (pp. 101-130) (2nd ed.). Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang.

Hegge, Per Egil. (2004). Forvaltning og innenrikspolitikk. In Tove Bull and Harald Nordvik (Eds.), *Norge: Portrett av en nasjon* (pp. 76-108). Oslo, Norway: Dinamo Forlag.

Heyneman, Stephen P. (2003). 'The history and problems in the making of education policy at the World Bank 1960-2000'. *International Journal of Educational Development*, **23**, 315-338.

Higginson, J.H. (2001). The development of a discipline: Some reflections on the development of comparative education as seen through the pages of the journal Compare. In Keith Watson (Ed.), *Doing comparative education research: Issues and problems* (pp. 373-388). Oxford, England: Symposium Books.

Hodkinson, Phil and Smith, John K. (2004). The relationship between research, policy and practice. In Gary Thomas and Richard Pring (Eds.), *Evidence-based practice in education* (pp. 150-163). Buckingham, England: Open University Press.

Hofstede, Geert. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviours, institutions and organisations across nations*. London: Sage.

Holmes, Brian and McLean, Martin. (1992). *The curriculum: A comparative perspective*. London: Routledge.

Husu, Jukka. (2002). Navigating through pedagogical practice: Teachers' epistemological stance towards pupils. In Ciaran Sugrue and Christopher Day (Eds.), *Developing teachers and teaching practice: International research perspectives* (pp. 58-72). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Imsen, Gunn. (2004). Læreren mellom styring og frihet. In Petter Aasen, Per Bjørn Foros and Per Kjøel (Eds.), *Pedagogikk og politikk: Festskrift til Alfred Oftedal Telhaug i anledning 70-årsdagen 25. september 2004* (pp. 313-331). Oslo, Norway: Cappelen Akademiske Forlag.

Jessop, Bob. (2000). The state and the contradictions of the knowledge-driven economy. In John R. Bryson, Peter W. Daniels, Nick Henry and Jane Pollard (Eds.), *Knowledge, space, economy* (pp. 63-78). London: Routledge.

Jones, Ken. (2008). *Education in Britain*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Jonsson, Jan O. (1999). Dismantling the class society through educational reform?: The success and failure of Swedish school politics. In Achim Leschinsky and Karl Ulrich Mayer (Eds.), *The comprehensive school experiment revisited: Evidence from Western Europe* (pp. 148-175) (2nd ed.). Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang.

Kagda, Sakina and Cooke, Barbara. (2006). *Cultures of the world: Norway* (2nd ed.). New York: Times.

KD. (2009). *NOU 2009:18: Rett til læring*. Oslo, Norway: Author.

KD. (2004). *St.meld.nr. 30. (2003-2004): Kultur for læring*. Oslo, Norway: Author.

Kennedy, Mark. (2005). *Inside teaching: How classroom life undermines reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kirk, Samuel A., Gallagher, James J., Anastasiow, Nicholas J., and Coleman, Mary Ruth. (2006). *Educating exceptional children* (11th ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Klette, Kirsti., Carlgren, Ingrid., Rasmussen, Jens., Simola, Hannu., and Sundkvist, Maria (Eds.). (2000). *Restructuring Nordic teachers: An analyses of policy texts from Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway* (Report No. 10). Norway: University of Oslo, Institute for educational research.

Klette, Kirsti. (2003). Lærernes klasseromsarbeid: Interaksjons- og arbeidsformer i norske klasserom etter Reform 97. In Kirsti Klette (Ed.), *Klasserommets praksisformer etter Reform 97* (pp. 39-76). Norway: Universitetet i Oslo, Det utdanningsvitenskapelige fakultet og Norges forskningsråd.

Kluth, Paula., Straut, Diana M., and Biklen, Douglas P. (2003). Access to academics for all students. In Paula Kluth, Diana M. Straut and Douglas P. Biklen (Eds.), *Access to academics for all students: Critical approaches to inclusive curriculum, instruction, and policy* (pp.1-32). New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Kompf, Michael and Brown, Alan F. (2005). Teachers' personal and professional ideals about practice. In Pam M. Denicolo and Michael Kompf (Eds.), *Teacher thinking and professional action* (pp. 99-108). London: Routledge.

Kozulin, Alex and Gindis, Boris. (2007). Sociocultural theory and education of children. In Harry Daniels, Michael Cole and James V. Wertsch (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Vygotsky* (pp. 332-362). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kroksmark, Tomas. (2006). *Den tidløse pedagogikken*. Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget.

KUF. (1997). *Core curriculum for primary, secondary and adult education in Norway*. Oslo, Norway: Author.

Kushner, Tony. (1994). Immigration and 'race relations' in postwar British society. In Paul Johnson (Ed.), *20th century Britain: Economic, social and cultural change* (pp. 411-426). London: Longman.

Kvale, Steinar and Brinkmann, Svend. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Langford, Peter E. (2005). *Vygotsky's developmental and educational psychology*. New York: Psychology Press.

Levinson, Bradley A. and Holland, Dorothy. (1996). The cultural production of the educated person: An introduction. In Bradley A. Levinson, Douglas E. Foley and Dorothy C. Holland (Eds.), *The cultural production of the educated person: Critical ethnographies of schooling and local practice*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Lewis, Theodore. (1999). Valid knowledge and the problem of practical arts curricula. In Bob Moon and Patricia Murphy (Eds.), *Curriculum in context* (pp. 130-147). London: Paul Chapman.

Lingard, Bob. (2009). Pedagogizing teacher professional identities. In Sharon Gewirtz, Pat Mahony, Ian Hextall and Alan Cribb (Eds.), *Changing teacher professionalism: International trends, challenges and ways forward* (pp. 81-93). New York: Routledge.

Loughran, John. (2002). Understanding and articulating teacher knowledge. In Ciaran Sugrue and Christopher Day (Eds.), *Developing teachers and teaching practice: International research perspectives* (pp. 146-161). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Lovdata. (2008). *Opplæringslova*. Oslo, Norway. Cappelen Akademisk Forlag.

Lowe, Hilary. (2005). Meeting individual differences: Pupil grouping, progression and differentiation. In Susan Capel, Marilyn Leask and Tony Turner (Eds.), *Learning to teach in the secondary school: A companion to school experience* (pp. 153-168) (4th ed.). London: Routledge.

Lønning, Inge. (2001). 'Høyre satser på skole og utdanning'. *Bedre skole* 3, 16-20.

McLaughlin, Milbrey W. (2002). Sites and sources of teachers' learning. In Ciaran Sugrue and Christopher Day (Eds.), *Developing teachers and teaching practice: International research perspectives* (pp. 95-115). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

McLean, Martin. (1990). *Britain and a single market Europe: Prospects for a common school curriculum*. London: Kogan Page.

McLean, Martin. (1995). *Educational traditions compared: Content, teaching and learning in industrialised countries*. London: David Fulton.

Moore, Jerry D. (2004). *Visions of culture: An introduction to anthropological theories and theorists*. Oxford, England: Altamira Press.

Morgan, Kenneth O. (2001). The twentieth century (1914-2000). In Kenneth O. Morgan (Ed.), *The Oxford history of Britain* (pp. 582-680). England: Oxford University Press.

Nash, Roy. (2004). Can the arbitrary and the necessary be reconciled?: Scientific realism and the school curriculum. In Mark Olssen (Ed.), *Culture and learning: Access and opportunity in the classroom*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

NESH. (2006). *Guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences, law and humanities*. Oslo, Norway: Author.

Oberg, Antoinette. (2005). The ground of professional practice. In Pam M. Denicolo and Michael Kompf (Eds.), *Teacher thinking and professional action* (pp. 77-90). London: Routledge.

OECD. (2004). *Learning from tomorrow's world: First results from PISA 2003*. Paris: Author.

OECD. (2007). *PISA - The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment* [Brochure].

Paris: Author.

OPSI. (2004). *Children Act 2004*. Retrieved March, 12th, 2009, from

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/ukpga_20040031_en_1

Ornstein, Allan C. (2007). Philosophy as a basis for curriculum decisions. In Allan C. Ornstein, Edward F. Pajak and Stacey B. Ornstein (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in curriculum* (pp. 5-11) (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Ornstein, Allan C. and Hunkins, Francis P. (1998). *Curriculum: Foundations, principles, and issues* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Oslo kommune, byrådsavdeling for kultur og utdanning. (2009). *Integrering og mangfold*.

Retrieved November, 6th, 2009, from http://www.byrådsavdeling-for-kultur-og-utdanning.oslo.kommune.no/mangfold_og_integrering/

Oslo kommune, kulturetaten. (2009a). *Kulturetaten*. Retrieved November, 6th, 2009, from

<http://www.kulturetaten.oslo.kommune.no/>

Oslo kommune, kulturetaten. (2009b). *Munch/Stenersen-museet og Deichmanske bibliotek til Bjørvika*. Retrieved November, 6th, 2009, from

<http://www.kulturetaten.oslo.kommune.no/bjorvika/>

Oslo kommune, utdanningsetaten. (2009). *Tilpasset og inkluderende oppl ring*. Retrieved November, 6th, 2009, from http://www.utdanningsetaten.oslo.kommune.no/satsingsomrader/tilpasset_opplaring/

Oslo kommune, utviklings- og kompetanseetaten (2009). Retrieved November, 6th, 2009, from <http://www.utviklings-og-kompetanseetaten.oslo.kommune.no/oslostatistikken/article147066-11003.html>

Oslo Teknopol. (2009). *Hvorfor Osloregionen?*. Retrieved November, 6th, 2009, from <http://www.oslo.teknopol.no/Hovedmeny/Hvorfor-Osloregionen2/Naringsklynger-i-fokus/>

Patton, Michael Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.

Peach, Ceri. (2002). Empire, the economy, and immigration: Britain 1850-2000. In Paul Slack and Ryk Ward (Eds.), *The peopling of England: The shaping of a human landscape* (pp. 255-280). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Pharo, Helge. (1993). Norway and the world since 1945. In Anne Cohen Kiel (Ed.), *Continuity and change: Aspects of contemporary Norway* (pp. 233-261). Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

Pihl, J. (1999). Enhetsskolen i det flerkulturelle samfunnet. In Dag Bredal (Ed.) *Frihetens k r 1999: En bedre skole*. Oslo, Norway: Liberalt forskningsinstitutt.

Pollard, Andrew (with Collins, Janet., Maddock, Mandy., Simco, Neil., Swaffield, Sue., Warin, Joe., and Warwick, Paul). (2005). *Reflective teaching: Evidence-informed professional practice* (2nd ed.). London: Continuum.

Potts, Patricia. (2007). The place of experience in comparative education research. In Mark Bray, Bob Adamson and Mark Mason (Eds.), *Comparative and international research: Approaches and methods, Volume 19*, CERC Studies in Comparative Education (pp. 63-81). Comparative education research centre, Hong Kong: Springer.

Powell, David. (2002). *Nationhood and identity: The British state since 1800*. London: I.B Tauris.

Pring, Richard. (2006). Labour government policy. In David Phillips and Geoffrey Walford (Eds.), *Tracing education policy: Selections from the Oxford review of education* (pp. 416-432). London: Routledge.

Pring, Richard. (2008). The common school. In Mark Halstead and Graham Haydon (Eds.), *The common school and the comprehensive ideal: A defence by Richard Pring with complementary essays* (pp. 1-19). Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell.

QCDA. (2007a). *Secondary curriculum, key stage 3-4: Personal development*. Retrieved March, 10th, 2009, from <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/personal-development/index.aspx>

QCDA. (2007b). *Equalities, diversity and inclusion*. Retrieved March, 10th, 2009, from <http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/About-the-secondary-curriculum/equalities-diversity-and-inclusion/index.aspx>

QCDA. (2007c). *The secondary curriculum*. Retrieved March, 10th, 2009, from <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/index.aspx>

QCDA. (2007d). *Designing your curriculum*. Retrieved March, 10th, 2009, from <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/designing-your-curriculum/index.aspx>

QCDA. (2007e). *Secondary curriculum, key stage 3-4: Building personal development into the curriculum*. Retrieved March, 10th, 2009, from <http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/personal-development/Personal-development-in-the-curriculum/index.aspx>

QCDA. (2008). *The new secondary curriculum: What has changed and why?* [Brochure]. London: Author.

Reich, Rob. (2008). How and why to support common schooling and educational choice at the same time. In Mark Halstead and Graham Haydon (Eds.), *The common school and the comprehensive ideal: A defence by Richard Pring with complementary essays* (pp. 207-223). Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell.

Robbins, Derek. (2000). *Bourdieu and culture*. London: Sage.

Ruter. (2008). *Rutetilbud*. Retrieved November, 6th, 2009, from <http://www.ruter.no/Rutetilbud/>

Seeberg, Marie Louise. (2003). *Dealing with difference: two classrooms, two countries: A comparative study of Norwegian and Dutch processes of alterity and identity, drawn from three points of view* (NOVA Report No. 18/03). Norway: University of Bergen, Institute of social anthropology.

Sejersted, Francis. (2000). *Norsk idyll?*. Oslo, Norway: Pax Forlag.

Skaalvik, Einar Melgren and Fossen, Inger. (1995). *Tilpassing og differensiering: Idealer og realiteter i norsk grunnskole*. Trondheim, Norway: Tapir Forlag.

Simon, Brian. (2001). Blair on education. In Clyde Chitty and Brian Simon (Eds.), *Promoting comprehensive education in the 21st century* (pp. 95-102). Staffordshire, England: Trentham Books.

Sitton, John F. (2003). *Habermas and contemporary society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

SSB. (2008). *Bruttoinntekt, gjennomsnitt*. Retrieved August, 10th, 2009, from http://statbank.ssb.no/statistikkbanken/Default_FR.asp?PXSid=0&nvl=true&PLanguage=0&tilside=selectvarval/define.asp&Tabellid=06547

SSB. (2009). *Elevar i grunnskolen*. Retrieved March, 14th, 2010, from <http://www.ssb.no/aarbok/tab/tab-161.html>

Stein, Sandra J. (2004). *The culture of education policy*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Strømstad, Marit., Nes, Kari., and Skogen, Kjell. (2004). *Hva er inkludering?: Evaluering av Reform 97*. Vallset, Norway: Oplandske Bokforlag.

Teachernet. (2010). *An investigation of personalised learning approaches used by schools*.

Retrieved February 22nd, 2010, from

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/research/current/personalisedlearning/>

Telhaug, Alfred Oftedal. (1994). *Utdanningspolitikken og enhetsskolen*. Oslo, Norway: Didakta Norsk Forlag.

Telhaug, Alfred Oftedal. (2006). *Skolen mellom stat og marked: Norsk skoletenkning fra år til år 1990-2005* (2nd ed.). Oslo, Norway: Didakta Norsk Forlag.

Telhaug, Alfred Oftedal. (2008). *Norsk skole i kulturkonservativt perspektiv: Formidling og polemikk*. Oslo, Norway: Abstrakt Forlag.

Telhaug, Alfred Oftedal and Mediås, Odd Asbjørn . (2003). *Grunnskolen som nasjonsbygger*. Oslo, Norway: Abstrakt Forlag.

Terzi, Lorella. (2008). Capability and educational equality: The just distribution of resources to students with disabilities and special educational needs. In Mark Halstead and Graham Haydon (Eds.), *The common school and the comprehensive ideal: A defence by Richard Pring with complementary essays* (pp. 255-271). Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell.

Thomassen, Lasse. (2008). *Deconstructing Habermas*. New York: Routledge.

Thuesen, Nils Petter. (2000). *Fakta om Norge*. Oslo, Norway: Orion Forlag.

Tidsbrukutvalget. (2009). *Rapport fra Tidsbrukutvalget*. Oslo, Norway. Author.

Tjeldvoll, Arild. (1998). Quality of equality. In Arild Tjeldvoll (Ed.), *Education and the Scandinavian welfare state in the year 2000: Equality, policy, and reform* (pp. 3-21). New York: Garland.

Tomlinson, Sally. (2005). *Education in a post-welfare society* (2nd ed.). Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.

Trowler, Paul. (2003). *Education Policy* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Udir. (2006). *Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet: Prinsipper for opplæringen*. Retrieved September 12th, 2009, from http://www.udir.no/Artikler/_Lareplaner/Prinsipp-for-opplaringa-i-Kunnskapsloftet/

Udir. (2007). *Kompetanse for tilpasset opplæring*. Oslo, Norway: Author.

UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education*. Paris. Author.

UNESCO. (2005). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005. Education for All: The Quality Imperative*. Paris: Author.

Valebrokk, Kåre. (2004). Økonomi og næringsliv. In Tove Bull and Harald Nordvik (Eds.), *Norge: Portrett av en nasjon* (pp. 426-464). Oslo, Norway: Dinamo Forlag.

Veer, René van der. (2007). *Lev Vygotsky*. London: Continuum.

Visit Bradford. (n.d.). *Bradford map and travel information*. Retrieved May, 9th, 2009, from <http://www.visitbradford.com/maps-travel/>

Vormeland, Oddvar. (1993). Education in Norway. In Anne Cohen Kiel (Ed.), *Continuity and change: Aspects of contemporary Norway* (pp. 205-220). Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

Walford, Geoffrey. (2001). Affirming and contesting the comprehensive ideal: From common schooling to selection. In Robert Phillips and John Furlong (Eds.), *Education, reform and the state: Twenty-five years of politics, policy and practice*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Warnock, Mary. (2006). The concept of equality in education. In David Phillips and Geoffrey Walford (Eds.), *Tracing education policy: Selections from the Oxford review of education* (pp. 11-19). London: Routledge.

Wells, Gordon and Claxton, Guy. (2002). Introduction: Sociocultural perspectives on the future of education. In Gordon Wells and Guy Claxton (Eds.), *Learning for life in 21st century* (pp.1-18). Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Werler, Tobias and Sivesind, Kirsten. (2008). Norway. In Wolfgang Hörner, Hans Döbert, Botho von Kopp and Wolfgang Mitter (Eds.), *The education systems of Europe*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Whitty, Geoff. (2001). Has comprehensive education a future under New Labour? In Clyde Chitty and Brian Simon (Eds.), *Promoting comprehensive education in the 21st century*. Staffordshire, England: Trentham Books.

Whitty, Geoff. (2002). *Making sense of education policy: Studies in the sociology and politics of education*. London: Paul Chapman.

Wolff, Edward N. (2006). *Does education really help? Skill, work and inequality*. England: Oxford University Press.

Young, Michael and Spours, Ken. (2006). 14-19 education: legacy, opportunities and challenges. In David Phillips and Geoffrey Walford (Eds.), *Tracing education policy: Selections from the Oxford review of education* (pp. 338-356). London: Routledge.

Young, Robert. (2000). Habermas and education. In Lewis Edwin Hahn (Ed.), *Perspectives on Habermas* (pp. 531-552). Chicago: Open Court.

9 Appendices

Appendix A. Adjusted Teaching or Personalised Learning?

Adjusted teaching and personalised learning are evident in several political papers in Norway and England. Two of the most significant are the idea of adjusted teaching in Norwegian *core curriculum* (KUF, 1997), while personalised learning is evident in the English *ECM* (DCSF, 2004c). That pedagogy is culturally developed (Alexander, 2008) makes it natural to believe that these two concepts represent two cultural directions. It is further interesting how both concepts are considered to be political rather than practical derived (Bachmann & Haug, 2006; Dainton, 2004). In addition, no political suggestions are presented to explain or describe the use of the concepts (Bachmann & Haug, 2006; Dainton, 2004).

Adjusted Teaching

UNESCO (1994) explains the principle of adjusted teaching, “curricula should be adapted to children’s need, not vice-versa. Schools should therefore provide curricular opportunities to suit children with different abilities and interests” (p. 22). In addition, adjusted teaching is emphasised with a section in the Norwegian *core curriculum* (KUF, 1997), *prinsipper for opplæringen* (Udir, 2006) and legislated in *Opplæringsloven* (Lovdata, 2008). Furthermore, adjusted teaching is also underlined recently in the white paper *Kultur for læring* (KD, 2004), the research report *Forskning om tilpasset opplæring* (Bachmann & Haug, 2006) and a collection of relevant articles in *Kompetanse for tilpasset opplæring* [*Competence for adjusted teaching*] (Udir, 2007). These documents represent a massive political and academically emphasis towards adjusted teaching, and a natural result is that this is reflected in practice. This is confirmed when the culture for adjusted teaching in Norway is considered as high (Dale et al., 2005) and is linked to the comprehensive school idea (Strømstad et al., 2004).

The previous section illustrates adjusted teaching as heavily emphasised and a clarification of the concept is by that natural. Adjusted teaching contains various aspects, so a distinct and directed definition does not reflect the complexity of it. First of all, adjusted teaching is related to the principle of inclusion (Strømstad et al., 2004). The inclusive perspective makes by this the school to a receiver of the pluralism in the society. A further aspect of this is the fulfilments of access for all and individual need provision based upon students’ requirements and skills (Engelsen, 2003). The aspect of access for all is especially interesting in the Norwegian context of equality. The Norwegian understanding of equality has historically been understood as

providing access for all, while the need of individualised teaching has been overlooked (Werler & Sivesind, 2008). This is interesting because the definition of Strømstad et al. (2004) fulfil the aspects of equality as well as individual need provision, but the cultural understanding of adjusted teaching has taken a collective rather than individualised direction. This distinction brings relevance to the second aspect of adjusted teaching. The aspect of adjusted teaching according to requirements and skills was emphasised by Strømstad et al. (2004), but tends to be higher degree of individualisation through the descriptions of Dale et al. (2005). The latter writers focus on how differentiation is used as a tool to achieve adjusted teaching.

Differentiation is discussed through Skaalvik and Fossen's (1995) explanation of the concept, which underlines that the individual student or group receive different education than others. An approach like that has several consequences, but an additional aspect appears in the increased focus towards realisation and development of academically talents rather than single focus at low achievers. The third perspective of adjusted teaching is presented as a dilemma between the collective and individual focus (Bachmann & Haug, 2006). In other words, a tension between the *core curriculum* and the principle of adjusted teaching can appear. This makes it reasonable to question what is most important and how the aspects should be weighted. Is the national culture more important than the individual adjustments, or are individual adjustments more important than the national culture. The ideal solution would naturally be to find the balance, but this put high requirements to the teachers' knowledge and skills (Bachmann & Haug, 2006).

Before the balance can be found, an understanding of adjusted teaching should be achieved, but is challenged when the concept is interpreted very different. In this concern, Skaalvik and Fossen (1995) claim that adjusted teaching includes one common instruction, followed by different exercises at different levels. In the following of this, it is interesting that Klette (2003) questions whether variation and frequently changing of activities are beneficial. Furthermore, she underlines that individualisation and differentiation rarely appeared in Norwegian classrooms, especially after primary level. A similar perspective of adjusted teaching is presented when Dale and Wærness (2003) describe teaching in the same classroom as dominating practice at higher secondary level. In addition, they describe a degree of grouping, but in that case through randomly selection or mixing of students' ability levels.

Despite of different interpretations of adjusted teaching, one aspect can be agreed upon, it should include and be beneficial for all students. In other words, all should have equal opportunities to develop their skills and talents (Dale et al., 2005). The principle of adjusted

teaching replaced the idea of individualising and special need education through the curriculum of 1997 (Engelsen, 2003), and put by that new dimension to the profession of teaching. A natural consequence was that a wider spectre of students was included in the classrooms and challenged the practice of adjusted teaching. That the schools have failed in providing satisfactory outcome for all students is evident in evaluations of the 1997 curricula (KD, 2004), and is further confirmed when Norwegian compulsory education does not provide adjusted teaching for all (Strømstad et al., 2004). Two different aspects can explain this. First of all, the Norwegian standardised system has developed an aim for achieving likeness and entity rather than equal opportunities (Haug & Bachmann, 2007). Second, Norwegians have a tradition to say *all* when it means *most* (Strømstad et al., 2004). The consequence of this is clear; students are excluded in an education system of inclusion. It is further claimed that adjusted teaching promotes compliance because of teachers' lack of academically demands towards students (Haug, 2004). A gap between intentions and practice is by this evident and is further confirmed when the principle of adjusted teaching has become a vague concept (Strømstad et al., 2004). Furthermore, the teaching does not include all students (Haug & Bachmann, 2007) and should include more differentiation to all students (Tjeldvoll, 1998).

Personalised Learning

The English focus towards individualism has long traditions that got renewed emphasis in the period of 1979 – 1986 (Ball, 2008). This period is considered as a renaissance of Victorian laissez-faire individualism, which also was evident in The Third Way policy after the Labour party victory in 1997 (Ball, 2008). Individualism has further influenced British education, which traditionally has encouraged individual talents, while the low achievers have been less prioritised (McLean, 1995). In relevance of this, personalised learning is explained as realisation of individual needs, interests and aptitudes (DfES, 2004) and is further emphasised in significant political papers as *ECM* (DCSF, 2004c) and the white paper *Higher standard, better schools for all* (DfES, 2005). The significance of personalised learning can be exemplified with the former primary minister Tony Blair's statement of personalised learning as desirable (Simon, 2001). In other words, the schools have to make sure that every child reaches their capability (DfES, 2005).

The idea of personalisation is not considered as new, but includes a tailored education of aspects as one-to-one tuition, ability grouping and extra support for all children who are in need of it (Courcier, 2007). Personalisation can be defined as a cultural movement that is based upon a marketing theory within education (Hartley, 2009). It is further considered as a result of the

mass production of education in the 1960s, which gave new relevance to child-centred education and a need for personalised focus (Hartley, 2007). The concept of personalised learning is further linked to similar concepts as individualised teaching and differentiation. Individualised teaching is used to teach single students, while differentiation is used within the classrooms (Courcier, 2007). These concepts have by this similarity in the individualised focus, but are different in the practical teaching. This brings naturally confusion to the definition and use of personalised learning. A clarification is attempted when Courcier (2007) defines and explains the concept as a collection of old concepts that is more focused towards classrooms and group work (Courcier, 2007). Neither does this definition create a clear understanding of personalised learning, but it is likely that the governmental teacher resource website can give some explanations. In this regard, the explanation of personalised learning as “a real opportunity for learners to participate”, and that it can be approached in many ways does not create any clarifications (Teachernet, 2010).

The unclear definitions create a following issue for schools and teachers. First of all, the lack of clarity opens up for personal understandings and interpretations (Hartley, 2009), which again result in ineffective practice of the style (Courcier, 2007). Schools and teachers can make it to mean what they want it to mean (Dainton, 2004) because it is not considered as one specific learning style (Courcier, 2007). In spite of unclear understandings, some attempts to define personalised learning have occurred. One of the definitions underline that the degree of personalisation should be deep rather than shallow (Campell, Robinson, Neelands, Hewston, and Mazzoli, 2007), while another definition is explained as equal opportunities to learn the right way (Courcier, 2007). Both of them have a focus towards the individual students, but the concept of personalised learning is still vague. The concept is further defined as structural and pedagogical tailoring of personalisation (Hartley, 2009). This is explained as tailoring the pedagogy to students' needs, which is exemplified as teaching in whole class, one-to-one, pair or group work (Hartley, 2009). Personalised learning is further underlined to be a teacher responsibility to match the teaching with the need of every child (Dainton, 2004), but this has limitations in the English highly centralised and age related curriculum (Campell et al., 2007). None of the definitions clarify the concept of personalised learning, but one aspect is in common, it affects teachers' practice. This is interesting because individual development depends also on other aspects as cultural, intellectual and financial capital within the families (Campell et al., 2007). A following aspect of this is evident when personalised learning is considered as a modern culture of consumption, where the middle class legitimate consumerism (Hartley, 2007) and creates a self-centred and individualised culture (Hartley, 2009). Student

background is by this a significant aspect to make use of the personalised learning, which is beneficial for high-income rather than low-income families. This result is increased inequalities where those with lack of money are excluded from the consumer culture (Hartley, 2007) and have to be solved with resource allocation that skews the resources towards disadvantaged families (Campell et al., 2007).

In spite of various and unclear definitions, personalised learning is political relevant through texts as *ECM* (DCSF, 2004c) and the white paper *Higher standard, better schools for all* (DfES, 2005). The emphasis on the ideal school is an aim to reach the ideal school (Courcier, 2007), but has some serious challenges before it is fully implemented. First of all, the unclear definitions influence the implementing process where results differ heavily from the theory of personal learning (Campell et al., 2007). Second, there are no specific suggestions of how to implement the concept, which again result in a long process of adapting new curricula to it (Courcier, 2007). In spite of this, personalised learning should be used to enable students to construct their own knowledge (Campell et al., 2007) and find appropriate learning styles for individuals (Courcier, 2007).

Appendix B. Letter of Request, English Version.

Dear XX.

My name is Eddy Kjaer, and I am an MPhil student at the University of Oslo, Norway. I am interested in the English and Norwegian education systems, and in particular, teachers' perspectives of how the needs of all individuals can be met within the comprehensive school. I am writing to you now to request your help with my research.

Current literature generally fails to focus upon the teachers' perspective; teachers' voices are rarely taken into consideration during policy development, even though they are important indicators and tools for further developing a nation's educational system. My study aims to represent the teachers' voice through interviews with a small number of participants with the aim of contributing to the educational debate around individual needs.

I wonder if it would be possible for me to visit your school to speak with some of your staff. I am aiming to be in the UK in early July. I have no specific requirements of the teachers other than that they have experience in working as a lower secondary class teacher. I anticipate that each interview will last for approximately 30 minutes. I can send an outline of the questions I wish to ask as well as the ethical guidelines I follow which are used by the University of Oslo (UiO). A central tenet of these is the importance of confidentiality. Furthermore, I am including proof that I am, indeed, a student at UiO.

I hope for a positive reply and really appreciate any assistance you are able to offer me. I will contact you by telephone in approximately 14 days. Alternatively, you may wish to contact me; my email address is xx.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely

.....

Eddy Kjaer

Appendix C. Letter of Request, Norwegian Version.

Til XX.

Mitt navn er Eddy Kjær, og jeg er mastergradsstudent på Universitetet i Oslo. Jeg studerer innen fagfeltet ”Comparative and International Education”, og har særlig interesse av det norske og engelske utdanningssystemet. Mitt fokus er rettet mot lærernes perspektiv på hvordan elevens individuelle behov kan møtes i enhetsskolen. Med dette skrivet ønsker jeg å forespørre om deres hjelp til mitt feltarbeid.

Nyere litteratur viser store mangler i forhold til forskning sett fra lærernes perspektiver, og det tas sjelden hensyn til lærernes synspunkter når politiske avgjørelser blir tatt. Dette til tross for at lærerperspektivene er viktige indikatorer og verktøy for utvikling av en nasjons utdanningspolitikk. Denne studien har som mål å representere lærernes synspunkter gjennom intervjuer med et mindre utvalg lærere, og være et bidrag til diskusjoner rundt elevens individuelle behov i enhetsskolen.

Jeg forespør derfor med dette om å besøke deres skole og intervju noen utvalgte lærere i oktober måned. Den eneste forutsetning for deltakelse er at lærerne har erfaring fra 8. eller 9. trinn. Jeg beregner at hvert intervju vil foregå i omtrent 30 minutter. Jeg kan sende ut noen av spørsmålene på forhånd, samt universitetets etiske retningslinjer om ønskelig. Et av de viktige prinsippene jeg forholder meg til er prinsippet om konfidensialitet. Intervjuene vil foregå på norsk.

Jeg håper på positivt svar fra dere, og verdsetter sterkt deres bidrag til mitt feltarbeid. Jeg vil kontakte dere nærmere i løpet av noen dager. Dere er også velkommen til å kontakte meg nærmere på xx om det er ønskelig.

Mange takk.

Med vennlig hilsen

.....

Eddy Kjær

Appendix D. Ethical Guidelines, English Version.

The following guidelines are based upon attached guidelines from National Committees for Research Ethics in Norway (NESH, 2006).

- Researchers shall work on the basis of basic respect for human dignity.
- Researchers shall respect their subjects' integrity, freedom and right to participate.
- Researchers have a responsibility to prevent research subjects from being submitted to harm or other suffering.
- The informants have the right to withdraw from participation at any time, without this entailing any negative consequences for them.
- Researchers should consider and anticipate effects on third parties that are not directly included in the research.
- Research subjects are entitled to a guarantee that all information they provide about their private lives will be treated confidentially.
- Identifiable personal data collected for one particular research purpose cannot automatically be used for other research.
- Data related to identifiable individuals shall be stored responsibly. Such data shall not be stored any longer than that which is needed to attain the objective for which it was processed.
- Researchers must show respect for the values and views of research subjects, even if they differ from those generally accepted by society at large.
- Researchers are responsible for explaining to their research subjects the limitations, expectations and requirements that pertain to their roles as researchers.

Appendix E. Ethical Guidelines, Norwegian Version.

De etiske retningslinjene er basert på vedlagte retningslinjer fra De Nasjonale Forskningsetiske Komiteer (NESH, 2006).

- Forskere skal basere sitt arbeid på respekt for menneskeverdet.
- Forskere skal respektere deltakernes integritet, frihet og rett til å delta.
- Forskere har ansvar for å skåne deltakerne fra forskernes egen påvirkning eller andre belastninger.
- Deltakerne har til enhver tid rett til å trekke seg fra forskningsdeltakelsen. I så tilfelle uten negative følger eller konsekvenser for deltakerne.
- Forskere skal vurdere og avverge mulige konsekvenser for tredjeparter som ikke er direkte involvert i forskningen.
- Deltakerne skal garanteres at deres informasjon om private anliggende blir behandlet under prinsippet om konfidensialitet.
- Personlig data som er samlet til ett spesifikt forskningsformål kan ikke automatisk brukes til annen forskning.
- Data som kan identifiseres til enkeltpersoner skal oppbevares ansvarlig. Slik data skal ikke oppbevares over lengre tidsrom enn det som er nødvendig for å bidra til formålet det var beregnet til.
- Forskere skal vise respekt for deltakernes verdier og synspunkter, også når de motstrider generelt aksepterte holdninger.
- Forskere er ansvarlige for å forklare deltakerne om forskningens begrensinger, forventninger og krav som vedrører deres rolle som forskere.

Appendix F. Interview Schedule, English Version.

Date:

Time:

Location:

School:

#	Question	Prompts	Purpose (research question)
	Age: Education: Free time activities: Experience from lower secondary teaching:		Background Research question 3
1	There are a lot of different types of school in England. Can you tell me why you chose to work in this school?	Specific reason for comprehensive school? Only job available Close to home	Motivation Values/culture
2	If you think back to your choice of profession, do you remember your main motivation for being a teacher?	Salary Contribution to society Like to work with children / youths /	Motivation Values/culture

		people Colleges Enjoyed time as students Flexibility / my own “boss”	
3	You have worked XX years as a teacher. If you feel differently about teaching now than you did when you first began teaching, what is your motivation today?	Purpose of schooling changed? Students changed? Requirements to teachers changed? School system Colleges Holidays	Research question 3 Clarification statement
4	Different classes do usually have different characteristics. Can you tell me about some characteristics of your class?	Class size School culture Classroom / teaching environment Different needs /special needs High / low achievers How many teachers available / in classroom Behaviour Ability Homework / families	Research question 2

5	Can you tell me a little about the typical type of class you teach – how many pupils, the nature of the pupils in this school, the school culture, and so forth?	Methodology Assistants Planning	Research question 1
6	Different occupations emphasise different values. Can you tell me which values you see as most important for a teacher?	Social cohesion Performance/achievement Tolerance Diversity Accept difference Depends on type of school (private/public)	Research question 1 Research question 3
7	What do you feel about your time frame for preparing adjusted teaching to meet different needs?	Prepare/adjust to special needs Diversity Differentiation Send students out of class Limited achievement range of students	Research question 3
8	If you think about purpose of schooling in England, can you tell me what you see as most important tasks for schools in England?	Achievement (grades) / ranking Values	Research question 1 National

		Social cohesion Create good citizens Even out everyone Core subjects	Research question 3
9	There are both similarities and differences between the education systems of different countries. What impression do you have of these?	From the media National testing. Experience from other countries? Culture Values Achievement (grades) Social cohesion System level	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
10	Some concepts are frequently mentioned in education debates. Can you tell me about your interpretation of the concept “individual potential”?	Different talents Different needs What is “accepted” skills / potential? Get the best out of each student	Research question 2 Individual potential
11	One important principal of comprehensive school approach is based on diversity of students. To what degree do you think students have the same opportunities to develop their individual potential / talents?	The same vs equality Different talents, different needs? Different talents, different value? (Time frame)	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3

12	I asked you about the concept of “individual potential”, but can you tell me about your interpretation of “individual needs” as well?	Relation between “potential” and “needs”? From needs to potential – priority The best they can be vs what they have to learn	Research question 1 Research question 2 Individual needs
13	If you think about your class, what resources do you have available in your lectures?	Teachers / assistants Books Parents Nothing	Research question 1 Resources Practical issues
14	According to this, what possibilities do you have for meeting every students’ need in daily life?	Class size Limitations? Time frames Room for creativity School culture?	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
15	As you know, I am interested in how individual needs are met differently between England and Norway. So now I would like to talk about how we understand what a high achiever is, and what a low achiever is.	Organising – groups / individual work Methodology Books Teachers / assistants Parents	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3

16	If you should range your students into 3 groups, high, medium and low achievers, approximately how many students would you put in each category?	Diversity Different needs	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
17	When you thought about these 3 groups, what criterion did you use in the selection?	Achievement (grades) Skills (different/same) Social (friends together) Language skills Motivation Independence/own opinions	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
18	Can you describe a low achieving student or teaching situation for low achievers that you remember well?	How to adjust teaching. Low goals Testing	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
19	You just told me about a specific situation of meeting low achievers. Can you tell me how you meet / approach low achievers in your daily teaching?	Organising – groups / individual work Methodology Books Teachers / assistants Parents First priority Attention Physically close to instruction	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3

20	I asked you about some concepts earlier. Can you also tell me about your interpretation of the concept “equality”?	Equality vs “the same”	Research question 2 Research question 3
21	What consequences do that have for your teaching?	Adjustments in teaching Family background Assumptions/judgement of families	Research question 1
22	Some people will say that students need the same education. How do you understand the term “the same”?	Equality vs “the same” Opportunities Adjust to students’ level / differentiation	Research question 2 Research question 3
23	Let us say you have the possibility to create your own class, including selection of students. Could you describe your ideal class?	Reasons Size Skills Student behaviour Concentration “Normal functioning” Motivation	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
24	Can you tell me why you decided as you did?	Priorities Fun to teach Easier job / less difficulties	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3

	Contact details	Mail Phone Transcription Summary?	
	Thank you very much for using your time on this interview. Is there anything else you want to add before we end?		
	Are there any questions you would like to ask me?		

Appendix G. Interview Schedule, Norwegian Version.

Dato:

Tidspunkt:

Sted:

Skole:

#	Spørsmål	Stikkord	Hensikt (research question)
	Alder: Utdanning: Fritidsaktiviteter: Erfaring fra ungdomsskole:		Bakgrunn Research question 3
1	Det finnes et visst utvalg av ulike typer skoler i Norge. Kan du fortelle hvorfor du valgte å jobbe på denne skolen?	Spesifikke grunner til enhetsskole? Eneste jobb tilgjengelig Nærme bosted	Motivasjon Verdier/kultur
2	Hvis du tenker tilbake på yrkesvalget ditt, husker du hva som var hovedmotivasjonen for å bli lærer?	Lønn Samfunnsnyttig Liker å jobbe med barn/unge/mennesker Kolleger	Motivasjon Verdier/kultur

		Nøt tiden som student Fleksibilitet/min egen ”sjef”	
3	Du har jobbet XX antall år som lærer. Hvis du har andre tanker om læreryrket nå enn da du startet, hva er motivasjonen din i dag?	Hensikten med skole/utdanning er endret? Elever endret? Krav til lærere er endret? Skolesystemet Kolleger Frier	Research question 3
4	Ulike klasser / grupper har vanligvis ulike karakteristikk / kjennetegn. Kan du fortelle om noen karakteristikk / kjennetegn for din klasse / gruppe?	Klassestørrelse Skolekultur Klasserom/læringsmiljø Ulike behov /spesielle behov Høyt/lavt presterende Lærertetthet i klasserommet Atferd Kapasitet Lekser/familie	Research question 2
5	Kan du fortelle litt om kjennetegnene for din klasse – antall elever, typiske kjennetegn for elever på denne skolen, skolekultur, etc?	Metode Assistenten Planlegging	Research question 1

6	Ulike yrker fokuserer på ulike verdier. Kan du fortelle hvilke verdier du ser på som de viktigste for en lærer?	Sosialt samlende Prestere/prestasjoner Toleranse Variasjon Akseptere ulikheter Avhenger av skoletype (privat/offentlig)	Research question 1 Research question 3
7	Hva føler du om dine tidsrammer til forberedelse av tilpasset opplæring for å møte ulike behov / den enkelte elev?	Forberede/tilpasse spesielle behov Variasjon Differensiering Sende elever ut av klassen Begrenset bredde av elevprestasjoner	Research question 3
8	Hvis du tenker på hensikten med skolen i Norge, kan du fortelle hva du ser på som de viktigste oppgavene for skolene i Norge?	Prestasjoner (karaktererer)/rangering Verdier Sosialt samlende Skape gode borgere Utjevning av alle Primærfagene	Research question 1 Research question 3 Nasjonalt

9	Det er både likheter og ulikheter mellom utdanningssystemer i ulike land. Hvilket inntrykk har du av disse?	Fra media Nasjonal testing Erfaringer fra andre land Kultur Verdier Prestasjoner (karakterer) Sosialt samlande Systemnivå	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
10	Noen begreper er ofte brukt i utdanningsdebatter. Kan du fortelle om din fortolkning av begrepet “individuell potensial”?	Ulike talenter Ulike behov Hva er ”aksepterte” ferdigheter / potensial? Få det beste ut av hver enkelt elev	Research question 2 Individuell potensial
11	Et viktig prinsipp I enhetsskolen er basert på elevmangfold. I hvilken grad tror du har de samme mulighetene til å utvikle deres individuelle potensial / talent.	Likhet vs like muligheter Ulike talenter, ulike behov? Ulike talenter, ulik verdi? (Tidsramme)	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
12	Tidligere spurte jeg deg om begrepet “individuell potensial”, men kan du også fortelle meg om din fortolkning av “individuelle behov”?	Forhold mellom “potensial” og “behov”? Fra behov til potensial – prioritering Beste mulige oppnåelse vs hva må	Research question 1 Research question 2 Individuelle behov

		læres	
13	Hvis du tenker på klassen din, hvilke ressurser har du tilgjengelig i undervisningen din?	Lærere/assistenter Bøker Foreldre Ingenting	Research question 1 Ressurser Praktiske utfordringer
14	Med tanke på dette, hvilke muligheter har du til å møte hver enkelte students daglige opplæringsbehov?	Klassestørrelse Begrensninger? Tidsrammer Muligheter for kreativitet Skolekultur	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
15	Som du vet, er jeg interessert i hvordan individuelle opplæringsbehov / TOP er møtt ulikt I England og Norge. Jeg vil derfor snakke om hvordan vi kan forstå / definere hva som er en faglig sterk elev, og hva som er en faglig svak elev.	Organisering – grupper/individuell arbeid Metode Bøker Lærere/assistenter Foreldre	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
16	Hvis du skulle rangere elevene dine inn i 3 grupper, faglig sterke, middels og svake elever, omtrent hvor mange elever ville du definere i hver kategori?	Variasjon Ulike behov	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3

17	Da du vurderte inndelingen i disse 3 gruppene, hvilke kriterier brukte du i utvelgelsen?	Prestasjoner (karakterer) Ferdigheter (ulike/like) Sosialt (venner sammen?) Språkferdigheter Motivasjon Uavhengig/egne meninger	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
18	Kan du beskrive en faglig svak elev eller læringssituasjon med en faglig svak elev du husker godt?	Hvordan tilpasse opplæringen Lave mål Testing	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
19	Du fortalte meg nå om en læringssituasjon for en faglig svak elev. Kan du også fortelle hvordan du møter faglig svake elever i den daglige undervisningen?	Organisering – gruppe/individuell arbeid Metode Bøker Lærere/assistenter Foreldre Førsteprioritet Oppmerksomhet Fysisk til stede ved instruksjoner	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
20	Jeg spurte deg om noen begreper tidligere. Kan du også fortelle om din fortolkning av begrepet “like muligheter” (equality)?	Like muligheter vs likhet	Research question 2 Research question 3

21	Hvilke konsekvenser har dette for din undervisning?	Tilpasning av undervisning Familiebakgrunn Antakelser/forhåndsbestemmelse av familier	Research question 1
22	Noen vil argumentere med at alle elever trenger den samme utdanningen. Hvordan forstår du begrepet “likhet”?	Like muligheter vs likhet Muligheter Tilpasning til elevens behov / differensiering	Research question 2 Research question 3
23	La oss si at du har muligheten til å sette sammen din egen klasse / gruppe, inkludert utvelgelse av elever. Kan du beskrive din idealklasse/gruppe?	Begrunnelse Størrelse Ferdigheter Elevoppførsel Konsentrasjon “Normalt fungerende” Motivasjon	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3
24	Kan du fortelle hvorfor du valgte som du gjorde?	Prioriteter Morsomt å undervise Enklere jobb / færre vanskeligheter	Research question 1 Research question 2 Research question 3

	Kontaktinformasjon	E-post Telefon	
--	--------------------	-------------------	--

		Transkribering Oppsummering?	
	Mange takk for at du brukte noe av tiden din på dette intervjuet. Er det noe du ønsker å legge til før vi avslutter?		
	Er det noen spørsmål du ønsker å spørre meg om?		

Appendix H. Coding Schedule.

Question #

Codes	Category	Comments